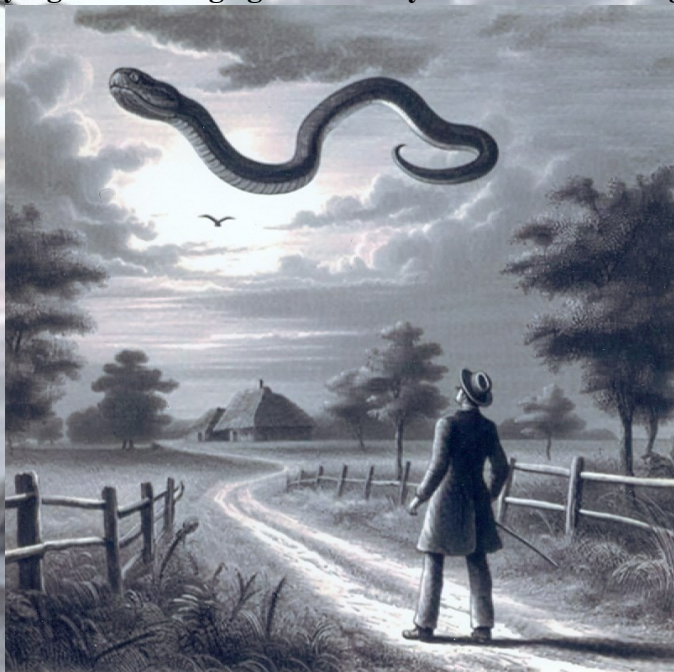


Flying Snake

A Journal of
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Flying snake image generated by Bob Skinner using AI



The Chester Cat Hoax of 1815 . Lamb with five legs . Duck with four legs . Freshwater octopus in Wisconsin . Military encounters with cryptids . A winged terror in Wales . Pine marten in Somerset in 1946 . Golden frogs of Bovey Tracey . A tiger in Hong Kong . Catholic Forteana . Aztecs in Siberia . More!

FLYING SNAKE SUBSCRIPTION AND GUIDELINES

ESTABLISHED BY RICHARD MUIRHEAD AKA DR DEVO IN 2011

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DR DEVO`S DIARY

*“ For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames.” Christopher Smart`
`Rejoice in the Lamb.`*

Here we are again ladies and gentlemen with issue 31 of your obscure cryptozoology and Fortean magazine, Flying Snake. We say good-bye to Loes Modderman (because she has decided not to contribute to Flying Snake anymore) with an essay on Catholic Forteana. Ulrich Magin is back with a piece on alleged ape men in Europe. Shane Lea and myself contribute a piece on military encounters with cryptids and I was surprised to find out that there were quite a large amount of such encounters, particularly in the 1980s between the army and mystery big cats in Devon. In fact, as you will see, encounters between the military and cryptids go back to before the time of Christ. As usual my friend and fellow Fortean Bob Skinner has contributed a number of items to this issue of Flying Snake, such as the image on the front cover generated by A.I. showing an encounter between a man and a flying snake. He also passed on the story on the back cover of a duck with four legs. Bob drew my attention and suggested source material for the story of the Chester Cat Hoax of 1815 and I want to thank him for passing along stories from the Old Odd News web site. Jon Downes (who I visited in Woolsery, Devon, in late July 2025) gave me permission to reproduce the story from Animals and Men # 1 on the golden frogs of Bovey Tracy, in Devon and the story of the tiger which visited the prisoner of war camp on Hong Kong island in 1942, from Animals and Men # 9. Whilst with Jon we did some video recording for my appearance on his show On The Track where I talked about what is in this issue of Flying Snake. I also had a rather uneventful visit to Clovelly on the north Devon coast where I went to two pubs and bought post cards and a pasty, before getting the bus back to Woolsery. Enjoy this issue, see you in 2026!

Investigation of alleged Tatzelwurm sighting and expedition report

By Jakub Roček, Ursidae89@gmail.com



I described this tatzelwurm sighting to the ChatGPT and wanted it to create an image based on it - this is the result

My first essay for *Flying snake* magazine was dedicated to Czech flying snakes. This time I continue with my investigation of European cryptozoological herpetofauna with the tatzelwurm. Tatzelwurm is a well known cryptid and has a quite long tradition. I like to think of it as an equivalent of a honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*), as it is quite small, but very fierce and capable of effectively defending itself. I believe some of tatzelwurm's abilities

might be greatly exaggerated. It has been researched by a few Czech cryptozoologists including Ivan Mackerle and Jaroslav Mareš. Some of the possible explanations proposed by them were a giant salamander and a some sort of relative of a gila monster from North America. I never thought it was a giant salamander, as it seemed to be very unlikely, but the second explanation might be much closer to truth. There are several well known historical sightings, but I was not able to find almost any modern ones (with just three exceptions). Ivan Mackerle researched this enigmatic cryptid in Austria himself and he made a quite surprising discovery – local people didn't know anymore what a tatzelwurm was. I think this creature might be extinct by now, if it ever existed. From time to time, there are very rare new sightings, but most of them doesn't seem to be reliable and none of them came from places, where tatzelwurm was historically supposed to live in. I wrote about two of them in my last essay on flying serpent *prašivec*. One comes from Slovakia and the second one from the Czech republic. This essay will be dedicated to the third one.

According to the article from *Magazín 2000 záhad* magazine there was a sighting at Šolcův pond in the north of the Czech republic quite recently, although no precise year was given. Šolcův pond is located near Raspenava. This pond is likened to the Loch Ness in this article, which is quite daring, as Loch Ness has a very long tradition of sightings and I know about only a single one at Šolcův pond, although some information might imply there are more of them. The article tells the story of four students of a secondary school. It was a warm evening and they wanted to swim right there. One girl took her dachshund with them and it was playing with them in the water. Suddenly there was a painful whimper from it and this dog suddenly disappeared under water in front of all of them. There were some small waves after a few minutes near the bank and then a monster got out of the pond. It was described as a giant green cone with head of a frog and jaws full of sharp teeth. It had short legs similar to those of lizards. One boy threw a stone at the monster, but it just slid over the hard scales. The creature growled at them, showed its teeth, turned and quickly got back into the water.

This body of water was known as a Scholzteich in old German maps and local people also called it Teufelsteich, which means devil's pond. They were convinced many dangerous creatures lived in it and it was better to be avoided at night. One of those creatures was a Schlammwurm – a mud worm. It allegedly had a long cigar-shaped long body with scales and jaws with sharp teeth. It allegedly slept during daytime hidden in mud or a swamp and went hunting in the evening. This description fits very well with the monster that killed the dog of those teenagers. Article also includes a drawing of the creature, it is a typical tatzelwurm, just dark green, not a brown one, as it is traditionally depicted.

There were also legends about other being – it is called „Schlammman“ or a mud man in the article. It is said it resembled a somewhat rotten tree and there is a story in which it saved a life of a lost boy, who nearly drowned in a swamp, by dragging him out of the dangerous area. There are also old German chronicles talking about a wild hunt and even a modern incident involving a couple from Frýdlant town. There are apparently more paranormal phenomena around the pond, so it might be a window area. Tatzelwurm sighting in Slovakia also seemed to be located in a window area, as there were many unexplained events all around it. Window areas are a very interesting topic and I would love them to be real, but at this point I perceive them more as a possibility than reality. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, as Carl Sagan said.

I investigated Šolcův pond for a long time and have visited it about four times since 2013. It was also my first cryptozoological field investigation. It very well represents my life journey as a cryptozoologist. I began as quite naive, romantic and capable of believing almost everything, over the years I got into a position, where I require really good evidence to take something seriously. During my first trips to this pond I didn't have any specialised equipment, just old binoculars and a camera. I felt like in a lost world when I got there for the very first time. It was hidden in deep forests in the Orlické mountains. There were prehistoric looking giant ferns of *Pteridium aquilinum* species growing just behind it. It seemed to be a perfect hiding place for a cryptid. I later realised it is not as wild

and remote as previously expected. The pond is surrounded by several towns and villages and there are also railroad tracks just behind it, this place was also very popular among outdoor enthusiasts, mainly swimmers and tourists. I also saw it drained during one of my visits and saw how suprisingly shallow it was – just about two to three meters deep with lots of mud. I realized it was a really unlikely place for an unknown species to live in.

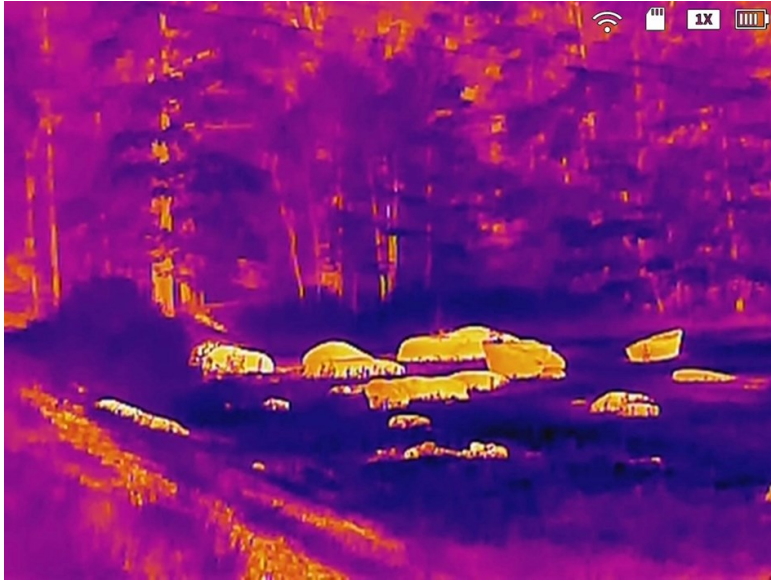
My last expedition to Šolcův pond took place this August and was three days long. So far it was the longest one and I also had



much better equipment with me than on my previous trips. I got there with my expedition van and I have also slept in it, which was a great strategy. I got there on Sunday and immediately started my research after getting there. The first phase was going all around the pond with some of my equipment. It included my Nikon Coolpix P1000 camera with an impressive superzoom, three trailcams and a drone. There was little of water left in the pond and it was largely overgrown with vegetation (for example *Eleocharis ovata*, *Juncus articulatus*, *J. bulbosus* and *Carex bohemica*). Habitat has changed drastically out

there since my last visits. I didn't see much fauna on my first walk around the pond. I encountered two very young common toads (*Bufo bufo*), couple of dragonflies (these included beautiful *Sympetrum sanguineum* and *Orthetrum coerulescens*) and a grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*). I also collected few samples of carnivore excrements and flew with a drone to see this place from a new perspective for a very first time. I also used three of my trailcams – on one of small islands, by large stones near dam on which tatzelwurm was said to be sometimes seen and then near a small stream flowing from the pond. I thought the monster might have been a misidentified Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), as they are known to be quite capable of killing of small dogs. Documenting this species at Šolcův pond would have given my idea some weight and I wanted to prove they are out there. I am now afraid, there are not enough fish for them to prey on there anymore, so I wouldn't expect otters there now. But there might have been there back then and I think an otter is the most likely explanation, those witnesses might have been influenced by those old German legends I mentioned in my text above.

I then quit the first phase and went to my van to have some deserved rest. I ate and read a great book by Rachel Aukes called *The Lazarus key*. Then came the second phase. It was searching with my thermal imaging monocular at night. I first observed lots of bats. Sadly I have not been able to identify their exact species, as I saw just silhouettes on my device. After this I encountered a large eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*). This owl took only from a few meters from me and it scared me quite a lot. Then I searched in the area with large rocks. On my way back to the van I caught a glimpse of tapetum lucidum in the dense forest under the dam. There was a young fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) watching me. I also encountered a large leather beetle (*Carabus corinaceus*) near the parking lot, where I left my van.



This rocky area is said to be a favorite place of local tatzelwurm

Now to the results from my trailcams.

TC-01 definitely showed a young European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and quite possibly a rodent of *Apodemus* genus.

TC-02 recorded many rodents. I have not been able to precisely identify them, but I believe, they are a wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvatica*) or a yellow-necked mouse (*A. flavicollis*).

TC-03 was by far the most interesting of all of them. It showed a male roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), a common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) a fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and a raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). There was one quite strange thing about those trailcams, as there were lots of photos and videos with no animal recorded on them. Something has to move in front of them in order to make a recording. I even got rid of some of the vegetation in front of them, which might move in wind and even after this there were photos/videos with nothing. I have been using trailcams for a long time and this is quite unusual.

Raccoons originally come from the North America and are on our very long list of invasive species. I knew we had their population, but I was very surprised by seeing one on my trailcam. I few years ago I visited Magdeburg in Germany and I found couple of their footprints by the Elbe river in Stadtpark Rotehorn. They are very common in Germany.

I had a great time at Šolcův pond, as I love to be in nature. These three days were not entirely dedicated to tatzeiwurm expedition, as I also visited several other places like Liberec Zoo. I brought no evidence of a tatzeiwurm living out there, but I didn't expect to be coming back with anything. I sincerely doubt there is anything unknown living at Šolcův pond. It is probably all a case of mistaken identity. People usually don't have a vast zoological knowledge and



they are often very wrong at identifying animals. I know about people who are not able to tell a grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*) from a white storm (*Ciconia ciconia*) and so on. Do you want to hear a great example of what I am talking

about? Go to a zoo sometimes, spend a day out there and listen to other visitors. I can tell you you are going to hear a lot of nonsense. Otter is still the most likely explanation I came up with. They used to be quite rare, but they are coming back. I saw an otter for just about three times during my lifetime. All of those sightings took place by the Sázava river.

There are also invasive pond sliders (*Trachemys scripta*) documented living in Šolcův pond. Under the right circumstances they might resemble a tatzelwurm, as they are reptilian, dark green and their carapace might resemble large scales. They are quite common in some places of Czech republic and push out native European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*). I encountered them near Ledeč nad Sázavou, at Peklo pond in Kolín or Bobnice near Nymburk. So far I encountered two various subspecies – red-eared slider (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) and yellow-bellied slider (*Trachemys scripta scripta*).

Let's also focus on our lizards for just a little bit. We have four species of lizards – the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and the common wall lizard (*Podarcis muralis*). These are way too small and I am sure no one would mistake tatzelwurm for any of these lizards – the differences are all too great.

A racoon might also play a part in this case as it is a non native species and people are not used to encountering it. I definitely do not say it was behind this alleged attack on the dachshund, as racoons do not behave like this, but any „unknown“ and strange animal seen by Šolcův pond might be this – a racoon. I am quite sure this tatzelwurm from Šolcův pond is an amalgamation of various known but misidentified species seen by the pond.

A yellow-bellied slider (*Trachemys scripta scripta*), Peklo pond, Kolín



Sources: (1) Magazín 2000 záhad (date unavailable) – Rybník hrůzy

Military encounters with cryptids

Shane Lea and Richard Muirhead

Encounters between the military and unknown or extraordinary animals go back a long way in time, well before the 21st Century in fact. The earliest case known to myself (Richard) was the confrontation between a huge snake, and a Roman army in what is now Tunisia during the war between Rome and Carthage (the so-called Punic wars) in North Africa in 256 B.C. According to the Latin text in “Valerius Maximus’ *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*,” written during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, he explicitly cites Livy for the story, giving us an idea of what we’ve lost in his Book 18 (Val. Max. 1.8 (ext).19; my translation, rather rough, based on the Latin text “The serpent of the Bagradas River in Africa was of such a size that it denied the army of Regulus access to the river. Many soldiers it seized in its enormous mouth and crushed to death not a few of them with its whirling tail. It could not be penetrated by the missiles thrown at it. Finally, they attacked it with many stones launched from ballistae from every side, it was brought down by the weighty blows. “(1) The Bagradas River is in what is now Tunisia. The largest fossil snake is the Titanboa, (*Titanboa cerrejonensis*) which was found in Colombia in South America, according to Wikipedia it could have grown up to 47ft long. Perhaps there was a similar snake in north Africa hundreds of years ago? “The discovery of *Titanoboa cerrejonensis* supplanted the previous record holder, *Gigantophis garstini*, which is known from the Eocene of Egypt.” (2.) Obviously Egypt is a lot closer to Tunisia than Colombia.

Another military encounter with a cryptid occurred in the 8th century A.D. between Charlemagne king of the Franks from 786 A.D., king of the Lombards from 774 A.D. and Emperor of the Carolingian Empire from 800 A.D. He encountered a water monster in Lake Banyoles in the Province of Girona in north-eastern Spain.

Javier Resines contributed an essay on the cryptid of Lake Banyoles in Issue 10 Volume 4 March 2016 of *Flying Snake*. (Drac—The Monster of Lake Banyoles Part One) He wrote: “The story tells us that a column of soldiers reached the monster’s lair in order to get rid of it. It however, killed almost all the warriors. The news came to Charlemagne and he decided to take charge of his army to avenge his men. From here on, there are two versions: In the one told by the chroniclers of the emperor, the fight was a draw. Farmers who attended the fight say the soldiers were defeated again and the Beast spared the illustrious and defeated warrior Charlemagne. After this attempt to kill the animal failed, the inhabitants of the area resorted to a Franciscan saint known as Mer of Narbonne (France) who—apparently—also accompanied the emperor and whose granddaughter was possibly attacked by the dragon.

Saint Mer (as history later called him) went to meet the Drac and began to pray to him, managing to calm the animal and take it meekly to the village. Once there he managed to explain to the citizens that, both the disappearance of the cattle and men, were caused by the outrages carried out by the Carolingian army, who used cattle to eat and men as soldiers after enlisting them by force...” (3)

In July 1915 there was a supposed incident involving a German submarine U28 and a sea monster off the coast of Ireland: “This much is beyond dispute: that on the afternoon of 31 July 1915, in the first year of the First World War, the British steamer *Iberian* was shelled, torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Ireland by the German submarine U28. This much is disputed: that when the *Iberian* went down, there was a large underwater disturbance — caused, it is supposed, by her boilers imploding. Quantities of wreckage were hurled into the air, and there, amid the debris, six members of the U-boat’s crew beheld “a gigantic sea-animal writhing and struggling wildly” which “shot out of the water to a height of 60 to 100 feet” (4)

This story of the U-boat and the sea monster originated in the autumn of 1933 when the Loch Ness Monster was in the news, from the skipper of the U-boat Baron von Forstner who claimed to have seen it along with five other members of the crew. Apparently it had “ a long, tapering head and a long body with two pairs of legs. Its length may have been some 20 metres (roughly 65 feet) .In shape, it was more like a crocodile than anything else.”(5). (Source: Deutschen Allgemeine Zeitung, 19 October 1933)It should be pointed out that this creature bears no resemblance to anything known about sea serpent observations. However Heuvelmans largely based his giant sea crocodile cryptid on this alleged 1915 observation. Indeed he described it as a surviving thalattosuchian, a surviving sea crocodile from pre-historic times. However, “ the sighting “ appears not to have been set down in writing until more than 18 years after it occurred, and at a time when marine monsters were frequently discussed; plenty of time had elapsed in which memories could have become distorted or confused, and it’s even possible to suggest an element of nationalism may have crept into the reports; Scotland had its famous lake monster, but here, in a country rapidly gaining in self-confidence...was a German report more spectacular than anything yet heard of at Loch Ness...” (6)

During the Vietnam war there were reports of encounters between soldiers and “Rock Apes”. About Rock Apes, this is an extract from a Reddit reports in 2024 :

“US troops reported large primates living in the mountainous jungles of the Vietnam Central Highlands. The creatures were described as six-foot tall with brown or reddish-brown hair like an orangutan. They were also described as bipedal. There are no known orangutans in Vietnam. (Even though they did live there in the past)

Shortly after US troops entered the Central Highlands in the 1960s, stories of ape-like creatures began to emerge. This was the first time in history that large numbers of humans had entered into this area.

In 1966 the 3rd Marines erected a base near Da Nang city on the jungle-covered Dong Den Mountain. These Marines reported attacks by unidentified animals that threw rocks into the compound, injuring some of the Marines. The Marines named them “Rock Apes,” and Dong Den became known as “Monkey Mountain.”

In 1968 Company M 3rd Battalion 5th Marines reported rocks thrown at them at Monkey Mountain.

In 1969 a patrol from Company D 1st Battalion 502nd Infantry Regiment encountered eight Rock Apes on Moulton Ridge that came walking along the trail. Mistaking their brown fur for Vietnamese army uniforms, they opened fire. One male charged the US soldiers while the other seven retreated, which is similar behavior to silver-back gorillas.” (7)

According to ObscUrban Legends Wikia—Rock Apes“ In the time before the arrival of American military troops in their territory, these unique creatures had established a surprisingly cooperative relationship with local human populations. They were known to approach nearby villagers casually, at times sitting beside them as if sharing a moment of quiet camaraderie or mutual observation...” (8)

In 1974, according to the War History Online web site, a North Vietnamese Army general General Hoang Minh Tha, “...organized an expedition in 1974 to try to capture or at least kill one of these legendary creatures. The expedition was unsuccessful, though, and no hard evidence for the existence of the rock apes was found...” In Vietnam there is a mystery hominid known as the “Nguoi Rung” or “ People of the Forest”. (9) According to one web site, “ Some Army platoons reported coming under attack from the apes and even fighting them in hand-to-hand combat.” (10)

The Mongolian Death Worm is an extraordinary cryptid that lives under the sands of the desert regions of Mongolia. An AI search by fellow Fortean Bob Skinner uncovered a statement that apparently there had been encounters between the military and the Death Worm. “According to “Lost Tapes” the Mongolian Death Worm was created when the US Government/Military started testing Nuclear weaponry in the Gobi Desert in the 1940s/50s. “ (11) *Lost Tapes* is an American fiction television series that aired on Animal Planet. Produced by Go Go Luckey Entertainment, the program presents re-enacted found footage depicting traumatic encounters with creatures cryptozoological, supernatural, mythological or extraterrestrial. Creatures featured include Bigfoot, the chupacabra, vampires, werewolves, and reptilians. (12)

In 1983 British soldiers attempted to track down a mystery cat or cats roaming farm land in north Devon “, a farmer in South Molton near Exmoor claimed to have lost more than 100 sheep in three months – the suspected culprit was the Beast of Exmoor, a panther-like feline that’s been sighted since the early 1970s. In 1988, a team of Royal Marine snipers attempted to track and kill the beast, but no trace was found. “ (13) A typical news story of the time is as follows, from the Belfast News-Letter of May 5th 1983: MYSTERY BEAST SIGHTED “The mystery black beast of Exmoor was spotted yesterday by Royal Marine sniper John Holden but he was unable to shoot because a farmhouse was in the line of fire. He was one of 10 Green Berets who joined police to scour rugged North Devon countryside for the catlike killer which in the past six weeks has killed and eaten 80 lambs, It kills by crushing the skull of its prey. The hunt centred on the South Molton area on the edge of Exmoor. Five pairs of heavily camouflaged marines with infra - red night - sights on sniper weapons were called in ’

According to the Wolverhampton Express and Star of July 9th 1983: MARINES ABANDON HUNT FOR A BEAST. “Commandos who helped beat the Argentinian army into submission have been forced to pull out of

their assault on the Beast of Exmoor. The Royal Marines marksmen have retreated after more than two months of fruitless searches. But they have vowed they will return to finish the job if they are given a strong possibility of success. "The Beast" thought to be either a giant wild dog or a puma, has so far savaged and killed more than 100 sheep and lambs." after hunts by farmers failed. Marine Holden (age 20), from Lancashire, spotted the beast at 5.35 am a few miles from South Molton. He said: "It was quite some way off but I could see it was very big, all black and looked very powerful. It was crossing a railway line, but there was a farmhouse in the background and it wasn't safe for me to shoot." A later report ran as follows: Wolverhampton Express and Star of July 9th 1983: MARINES ABANDON HUNT FOR A BEAST. "Commandos who helped beat the Argentinian army into submission have been forced to pull out of their assault on the Beast of Exmoor. The Royal Marines marksmen have retreated after more than two months of fruitless searches. But they have vowed they will return to finish the job if they are given a strong possibility of success. "The Beast" thought to be either a giant wild dog or a puma, has so far savaged and killed more than 100 sheep and lambs." Fortean Times # 40 (Summer 1983) chronicled the hunt by the Royal Marines for the Beast of Exmoor: On May 2nd 1983 they were based at Mr Ley's farm (Drewstone Farm) with infra-red equipment to look for the creature. On May 4th, as mentioned above, a marine spotted a large black cat but it was unsafe to shoot it. On May 6th a marine said traces of dog hairs were found at the scene of a sheep killing. On May 8th the marines called off the hunt for the mystery cat after it became unsafe after the Daily Express offered an £1000 reward for any unpublished photos of the Exmoor Beast. However the hunt must have been relaunched in some fashion because, as you can see from above, the search was still ongoing in early July.

The Chinese Wild Man or Yeren has been encountered by Chinese militia or army personnel occasionally as has the Yeti. According to *Mystery Animals of China* by David Xu: “6-year old Huang Xinhe, 17-year-old Huang Xinkui, 27-year-old Huang Xinming, along with many others, watched the 22nd prefectural militia as it sent away an extraordinary humanoid that had been captured in Fang County in 1922. The muscular creature was neither an orangutan nor a bear. It was fully covered with hair, had a large face with a prominent mouth, and had large feet.”(14) Xu goes on to record: “In late 1946 or early 1947, Zhai Ruisheng, a platoon leader of the 359th brigade, the Eighth Route Army, and some of his comrades ran across two humanoids in a remote ravine during their march. One was covered with reddish-black hair, the other with light brownish hair. They had human-like faces, large eyes, hands, and feet. The larger one was taller than an average adult human, and female (having large breasts, though its reproductive organs were covered by tree leaves.) The smaller one was slightly shorter, but its gender could not be visually determined.” (15) “The Eighth Route Army was created from the Chinese Red Army on September 22, 1937, when the Chinese Communists and Chinese Nationalists formed the Second United Front against Japan at the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, as the Chinese theatre was known in [World War II](#) “ (16) In early 1977, an official scientific expedition composed of 110 members of 32 scientific research institutions, museums, zoos, universities, and colleges throughout the country, as well as 56 soldiers stationed in the region, rushed into the Shennongjia Forestry District and launched a major effort to catch Yeren. “ (17) Regarding the Yeti: “In 1975, several Chinese soldiers from an army unit stationed in Tibet, along with several local farmers, spotted one such creature heading toward a snowy mountain.” (18)

The earliest encounter between the military and a cryptid that I (Richard) have found took place in 86 B.C. between the Roman general Sulla (old spelling Sylla) and a satyr or Wildman in Dyrrachium (modern Durrës in Albania) : “In that neighbourhood stands Apollo

- nia, near which is a remarkable spot of ground called ` Nymphaeum.` The lawns and meadows are of incomparable verdure...In this place , we are told, a satyr was taken asleep, exactly such as statuary and painters represent to us. He was brought to Sylla, and interrogated in many languages as to who he was; but he uttered nothing intelligible, his accent being harsh and inarticulate, something between the neighing of a horse and the bleating of a goat. Sylla was shocked with his appearance and ordered him to be taken out of his presence.” (19)

On May 25th 2025 a video was posted on You Tube titled Strange Things in the North West. The Same Thing that Attacked Gold Miners Was Seen By Soldiers. It was part of the Wartime Stories series. The episode recounted how in July 1924 gold miners near Mount St Helens in Washington state heard sounds near their cabin; a 7ft tall creature with blackish brown hair was seen by two men who shot at it. That night something threw rocks at their cabin. Three large creatures were throwing large boulders at their cabin. Many rounds were shot threw the door and the attacks continued until dawn. This took place at a place called the Van der White mine/Ape Canyon. Green beret soldiers and other U.S. military also encountered Sasquatch in this same area. One night in 2006 soldiers on exercise in the vicinity of Mount Rainier heard sounds deep in the woodland. They saw tracks deep in the mud and smelt a smell like rotting flesh. They found a clearing in the forest with tree limbs broken and spotted coarse hair. They were followed at a distance by wary creatures.

The same video mentions a book by Ethan Hayes titled Encounters in the Woods Volume 1 in which the story is told of a sixty eight year old ex marine and his son hiking in a forest in Washington state. The father had an accident in which he severely broke his leg immediately after seeing a “ monster” standing up by a tree in the woods. The creature was 7ft tall with long hair and a human-like face but it was not human. It had a cone shaped head and greyish skin. The thing followed them down a track, throwing rocks at them.

The final story is about an ex-soldier who had decided to live in the

forest in Washington state “off-grid”. He decided to go scouting around his cabin and saw X shaped structures in the woods. He heard something walking in the woods and proceeded to leave gifts for the creature on a rock outside his cabin. The creature would leave gifts in return. He left a beer and the creature left some twigs in return. The next night he left a medal and the Sasquatch (which is what it probably was) left some acorns. This exchange of items such as food in return for “presents” went on for weeks. This continued for nine months.

Shane adds: Cryptids vs military: First off, I would like to personally thank Richard for all the hard work, time and tireless effort, to publish Flying Snake. Call me old-fashioned, or old-school, but, I would much rather curl up with a good book, Flying Snake, or the CFZ Yearbook, rather than some computer chips, wires, circuits and radiation. Radiation? Yes, radiation! That warm feeling you get from your smart phone or your laptop is radiation, not quite the warm, fuzzy feeling you get deep inside from Flying Snake! Now regarding cryptids and the military, one may discover interesting encounters between the two. There have been many historical and modern altercations. Cryptids are seen by not only the average, upstanding citizen they have been encountered by military forces as well, across the world Can we believe the Military-Industrial-Complex? Well, maybe, if we suspend disbelief in this case, LOL. In all seriousness, I highly doubt that any military forces of any time, or nation, would spend precious time, effort, personnel and resources , engaging mere shadows. So I think we should give the Military the benefit of the doubt and examine the evidence with an open-mind. Adding to the subjects that Richard touched on, let`s begin with the cryptid

that defeated an army. At the end of the 8th Century , a cryptid defeated an army! Yes, the undefeated army of Charlemagne was beaten by a cryptid! The Lago Banyoles area of Spain was home to a group of creatures similar to a remnant population of dinosaurs. The main standout of this group was the Monster of Lago Banyoles. An interesting aside , banyoles translates as bathroom or loo. So we`re talking about Bathroom Lake here! Hopefully the emphasis was upon bathing, and not other activities , if you know what I mean (Look out for that warm spot Lol)



Knight vs Dragon

No wonder the Monster was ticked off! Anyway, I digress! Lago Banyoles is a beautiful lake, in a very scenic region of N.E.Spain called Catalonia. But, at the end of the 8th century, the monster of Lago Banyoles was attacking local villagers livestock and creating chaos and havoc, in the process. It reportedly had thick armour plates, scales and a row of spines on its back that repelled lances, spears, arrows (machine-gun fire-woops-that`s only in Xbox, LOL) and any manner of weapons used against it. It had wing-like appendages (undoubtedly forearms) and moved around on pillar-like legs (sounds like the robust legs of a bipedal theropod) When the Holy Roman Emperor Charles, known as Charlemagne, got word of the beast`s activities, he sent his here-to-fore undefeated army of Frenchmen to dispatch the beast. The creature sprayed the army with a toxic vapour! Was this vapour toxic because of its bacterial content thus indicating Sepsis in the soldiers? The Komodo Dragon of Indonesia has a deadly bite because of bacteria, from rotting meat, in its mouth. Not to mention, it is also venomous! Whatever the case may have been

after spraying the soldiers with toxic vapour, it rendered them with tooth and claw! Even Charlemagne leading his own army into battle could not defeat this "dragon". Charlemagne's army was defeated by this fierce cryptid, a feat no other army in Europe had been able to do!

Fossils of a Neoceratosaur, theropod dinosaur called Tarascosaurus sullivici, have been discovered in nearby France. The dinosaur's name was inspired by a similar, armoured, legendary beast from France called the Tarasque. Is there a connection between these two similar beasts, seen from nearby regions? One wonders.....Another military encounter with a cryptid, occurred in North Africa, near Carthage (near present-day Tunis), in Tunisia. This was during Rome's First Punic War (264-241 B.C.). During this time, the Roman Army in North Africa, led by Marcus Atilius Regulus, had an engagement with a giant snake reportedly 120 feet long, while attempting to cross the Bagradas (Medjerda) River. The enormous snake crushed several Roman soldiers in its coils, and drowned them, before being crushed to death in a much different manner, by being catapulted with giant rocks, by the Roman soldiers! The Romans measured the dead serpent and claimed that it was 120 feet in length! A snake using constriction probably indicates a constrictor of some type. Bernard Heuvelmans in his *Les Derniers Dragons d'Afrique*, opined that this giant snake was only an African Rock Python (*Python sebae*). African Rock Pythons (Africa's largest snake), only attain a maximum length of 20 feet- the largest recorded was 23 feet. Heuvelmans thought that hidden populations of African Rock Pythons could exist north of the Sahara Desert, just as crocodiles have done.

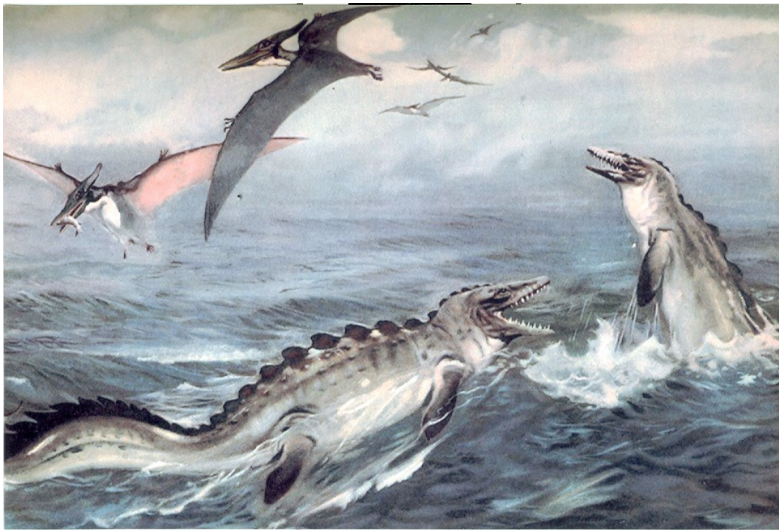
Right:

Taras-
cosaur



Fine, Heuv. What about the 20-foot maximum length? I've always felt that this was a rather weak explanation for such a massive snake, even when being promulgated by the Father Of Cryptozoology! If this snake was anywhere near 120 feet, (which boggles the mind, if one contemplates it), it would probably be some type of giant madtsoiid snake (large Gondwanan snakes from the Upper Cretaceous to Late Pleistocene), using the Bagra Das River to buoy it's massive bulk and gigantic weight. The size factor probably explains why many reports of giant snakes such as this one, are reported from semi-aquatic environments. The aquatic factor lends a certain degree of credibility to this report. A 45-foot, giant madtsoiid snake (*Vasuki indicus*), was discovered in 2024, in India. This fossil snake lends credence to the potential of even larger fossil snakes (and living snakes?), still awaiting discovery by Cryptozoologists. This time, the cryptid did not win out, but I'm sure that it made a lasting impression on the surviving soldiers and the Romans who beheld the skin and jaws that were saved from the snake! Sea serpents have had military entanglements. The French gunboat *Avalanche* fired upon a 65-foot, grey-black, sea-serpent, in Along Bay (Halong Bay), (1 of 2 sea-serpents seen together), off the coast of Viet-Nam. The "serpent" was described as being 65 feet long, with a seal-like (dark in colour?) head, with a jagged crest on it's back. When it exhaled, it did so in the form of a vapour - not a jet through a blow-hole, like whales. The size of 65 feet, is big, even for a whale. The jagged crest and method of respiration also rules out a cetacean. It was reported to undulate vertically in a snake-like manner. This could be an optical illusion, as the beast lashed it's tail from side-to-side and the tail appeared to rise above water-level. Beyond this, Eric Buffetaut in an ISC Journal article, demonstrated that some marine reptiles such as *Thalattosuchians* were capable of vertical undulations. All of this adds up to a very different type of sea-serpent- a Mosasaur, in point of fact. A Mosasaur of 65 feet, would be a very formidable opponent! Several sea-

serpents of this type were seen in Along Bay (Halong Bay), during this time(1898) and were seen by qualified French military personnel. Luckily, when the sea-serpent of Along Bay was fired upon, the explosions seemed to have no effect on the animal, so that it could live to fight another day! In this case, it was fighting for it's own survival, as it did NOT attack the Avalanche or any of it's crew. I don't think the French were firing on krill! Hopefully, the sea-serpents of Along Bay did indeed survive, if only to befuddle any trigger-happy Frenchmen or Occidental scientists from afar!



In closing, please keep an open mind when reading about these controversial subjects. Maybe a few deep breaths would help, or some meditation. Remember, I could be wrong, then again, I could be right! We live in a VERY dystopian, Orwellian, kind of a Jetsons or Star Trek world, with all the emphasis on robots and artificial intelligence. Star Trek and 2001 A Space Odyssey warned us of the hazards of too much reliance on computers. We did just fine without the bane of humanity- cellular phones, for many years. Currently, we have global warming- look at all the hot air coming from Washington D. C.!, LOL!

We have endless wars, on the verge of nuclear war and endless politically and religiously based shootings and rampages. There has even been an AI-assisted suicide in the U.S. The truth is, until we recapture the spirit of the 60's and 70's and Get Together, start loving one another, we are truly lost. We need to save the planet, but we need to save ourselves, first! If we save ourselves, we will find the wisdom to save the planet, including extant animals, cryptids and their ecosystems. Finding any of the cryptids discussed in this article or previous articles by Richard and myself would be beyond cool, it would be stunning and fantastic! Mostly, the SEARCH, for the cryptids is the most important- you know, it's not about the destination- but the journey. The faint hope of finding cryptids and the journey involved, keeps us going. So, to all of you searchers out there, we salute you! Happy Trails!

Jon Downes adds: In 1987 the Royal Marines, based at the Lymestone camp in South Devon, sent two expeditions onto Exmoor hunting for the so-called Beast of Exmoor, which was described as a huge black cat which had been predicting upon farmer's sheep. One of these expeditions is well known, but the second is both more interesting and far less well known. I was told about it at the time by one of the charge nurses at Western Hospital in Crediton, where I was a junior staff nurse at the time. It is unclear whether he was part of the expedition, or just went off drinking with somebody who was. However, many years later I received a drunken phone call from someone claiming to be one of the sergeants Who had been on the expedition. He claimed that although they had been ordered to stay in specific areas where the land that had given them permission, that they strayed out of those areas and totally illegally shot a big black panther. This they had apparently buried, and although I tried to buy the remains in the mid 1990s, it was to no avail. However, things that this witness told me about another matter involving the then Princess of Wales, which were not then public knowledge, did suggest to me that he was indeed an ex serviceman, Who have been in a position of some responsibility at the right time.

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The Golden Frogs of Bovey Tracey Re-published from Animals and Men # 1 with permission

THE GOLDEN FROGS OF BOVEY TRACEY

The story of the Golden Frogs of Bovey Tracey (1) is essentially one of those quasi religious medieval allegories which are in themselves garbled survivors from a pagan tradition. The story goes that a poor woodsman lived with his equally destitute family in Bovey Tracey. Their child was suffering from an unspecified illness and was not likely to survive the night. On top of this farrago of misfortune there was a severe thunderstorm. There was a knock on the door and a mysterious lady entered demanding (in a querulous voice) shelter and food. Despite their many misfortunes the woodsman and his family welcomed the mysterious lady, gave her milk and food (which they could ill afford) and a seat by the fire. She then blessed the ailing infant who was miraculously cured, and before vanishing (up a road called to this day Mary Street) she said that so that her benefactors would know this wasn't a dream not only would the child be forever cured but that the next day the family would discover a new spring full of crystal clear water and bright golden frogs.

The religious significance in this charming tale (excepting the frogs) is obvious, and I would hazard a guess that the story probably predates Christian times, and that the Marian details were added to a pagan story about Isis, Demeter, Gaia or any Earth Mother of your choosing. The thing, however that sets this story apart from a myriad of other B.V.M. Visitation legends is the odd vignette of the golden frogs. Just a tiny piece of medieval whimsy? Possibly not.

These frogs were said to have populated the area for many years. If so, what were they? The concept of brightly coloured amphibians inhabiting the English countryside is not as unusual as one might suppose. In a series of newspaper stories covered in Fortean Times one of the events in the aftermath of the falling of 'North African' Desert Dust upon Gloucestershire recently was the appearance of several small PINK frogs, one of which is pictured in the article. Whether there is any connection remains to be seen by

future inquisitive Herpetologists both in the Dartmoor and Gloucester areas. The article went on to describe specimens of a North African desert Locust which had also been carried by the wind to this country and which had appeared all over the south of England including Plymouth and St Austell, (Incidentally a similar falling of Sahara Dust, also pink was reported from Devon on the First of July 1968) and presumably has happened on various occasions during the past.

(Other pink frogs have been recorded over the years from Sussex and The Cotswolds, and although there is a well known red phase of the common Frog (R temporaria), these animals were definitely not it). (3).

It is not inconceivable that at some time in the past (the BVM visitation took place during an exceptionally violent thunderstorm), a similar collection of desert dust which contained yellow (or golden) frogs dumped its amphibious passengers deep in the heart of the Devon countryside where they established themselves for a short while with some success. Such a fall of yellow mud in rain happened throughout the region in January 1902 and again on the 22 February 1903. (2). The phenomenon also happened on the same day in Dorset (23):

"During the early part of Sunday morning, February 22nd 1903 with a South West Wind a strangely yellow fog prevailed at Corfe Castle but towards noon some drizzling rain fell and deposited some yellow dust-or rather mud as it was then on the surface of the earth and by 12.30 p.m. or perhaps a little earlier, the peculiarly yellow appearance was no longer seen in the atmosphere. Similar falls occurred in various parts of the world and there seems little doubt that all this dust that was deposited at about this time was carried in winds from the North African Desert, the Sahara in which sandstorms not long before had been observed and recorded. It was stated in the Dorset County Chronicle that this deposit of yellow dust was very noticeable on the pier at Swanage for some days after the fall took place".

Charles Fort was also interested in falls of 'Sahara Dust' (it is

interesting that the Sahara explanation was also prevalent when Fort was writing in the early parts of this century), and he was similarly unconvinced by the North African explanation. He pointed out that apart from everything else, the desert sand of the North African Wastes is silvery yellow rather than red, (4), yet these sky falls sometimes accompanied by animate and inanimate objects have been going on for millions of years. If we are to believe the official explanation that the pink frogs seen all over the south west of our country during the nineteen eighties were brought to England in clouds of pink dust blown from North Africa, then I feel that the existence of yellow (or Golden) Frogs in Bovey Tracey could be explained in the same way. As we have seen the clouds of yellow dust have appeared on several occasions and it seems possible that the mystery behind the delightful legend of the Golden Frogs of Bovey Tracey may have after five hundred years been solved.

David Bolton of the Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter suggested to me, half joking that the well attested phenomenon of North African locusts of varying species which arrive almost annually in the South West may also be responsible for the story of the Golden Frogs of Bovey Tracey. After all, he said with a wry smile, proving once and for all that it is not only Cryptozoologists that form ludicrous theories from the most flimsy of evidence, they are both yellow and they both hop.

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POSTSCRIPT

In February 1994 local and national newspapers (for example the Daily Mail 3.2.94) were full of the story of Jaffa a three year old Frog discovered in a garden in Truro. Jaffa was, as his name implies bright orange. The Westcountry TV News carried a story about him which said that he, and a similarly coloured mate had been released in a secret

location. We contacted Mark Nicholson of the Cornwall Trust for Nature Conservation and he revealed to us that far from being an isolated occurrence these oddly coloured amphibians are popping up all over the place. Ranging in colour from bright orange, through yellow to pale cream, these creatures have been reported from all over the county and even from elsewhere in the UK although they appear to be much rarer.

The only explanation that they have come up with is that the colour changes are something to do with the excessive levels of radioactive Radon gas in the county, but they stress that this is only a theory. These animals appear to breed true to type, but as yet nothing is known of their genetic makeup or their position within the ecosystem. Jaffa, himself has been released into a safe habitat, but it is hoped that more specimens (including some of the mysterious cream coloured tadpoles that have appeared in recent years) will be obtained soon. Hopefully we shall obtain some specimens soon as well and when we do, be assured that we will tell you as much as we can. For the present however, it is fairly clear that the charming medieval legend of the Golden Frogs of Bovey Tracey might not be so far fetched after all.

AND IT MAKES ME WONDER...

According to the BBC Teletext service CEEFAX (1/3/94) which in recent months has been a veritable fount of knowledge for fourteen zoologists hundreds of fish, 2-5 cm long were found flapping on roads in an (unfortunately) unnamed rural district of Australia. Zoologists (also unnamed) blamed the phenomenon on storms which had swept fish eggs, which had been dormant for a year or two into the clouds where they hatched and fell. Me, I reckon Rolf Harris took them with him when he was climbing his stairway to heaven.

RECOMMENDED READING

We are not the only UK Magazine which specialises in the subject of unknown beasts. Craig Harris is the editor of:

CRYPTO CHRONICLES
5 Willow Court
Droitwich
Worcestershire
WR9 9HL

THE STANLEY TIGER

by Jonathan Downes and Richard Muirhead.

Our current project is a book with the working title of 'The Mystery Animals of Hong Kong'. Numerous people have asked, one or other of us, why we are writing this book, when it is perfectly obvious that a territory the size of Hong Kong can't have any mystery animals? This could not be further from the truth. Hong Kong, is a collection of small islands and peninsular mainland in the estuary of the Pearl River in South China, and being on the cusp between the Northern Eurasian and Tropical Asian regions provides a unique habitat for a bizarre mix of wildlife.

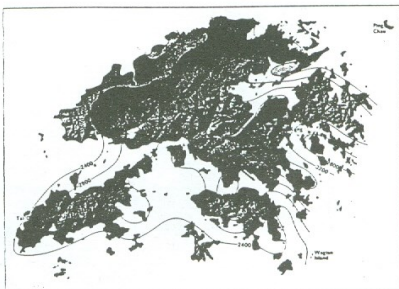
There are indeed, genuine cryptids to be discovered, and these are discussed more fully in the pages of our book, but the truth of the matter is that there are so many anomalies between the different accounts of the fauna of the territory, and so many truths, half-truths and downright lies have been printed about it that nearly all of the wildlife of Hong Kong is a mystery.

In this article we present one particular story with some facets to it which are of interest to the fortunate zoologist. It concerns the (now almost extinct) South China race of the Tiger, *Panthera tigris amoyensis*, and the man who was, perhaps one of the greatest naturalists to work in Hong Kong: Dr. Geoffrey Herklots.

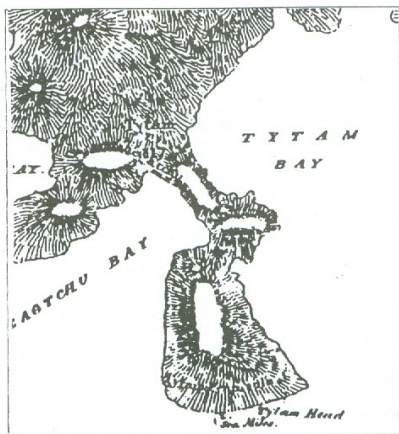
In 1951, Dr. Herklots published a book called 'The Hong Kong Countryside'. This was the natural history bible to the authors when they were growing up in Hong Kong. Large portions of the book was written whilst he was interned by the Japanese in Stanley Internment Camp between 1941 and 1945.

There is no doubt at all that tigers were regular visitors to Hong Kong during the first half of the century. One particular visit, however is rather more problematical. Herklots seemed unsure of what had actually happened: ⁽¹⁾

"During our internment at Stanley a remarkable story filtered into the camp that there was a tiger at large on Hong-Kong Island. Later it was reported to be on Stanley Peninsula. The guards got excited and it was risky walking about in the evening for an excited guard might fire at a prisoner mistaking him for a tiger! Soon pug marks were seen at the camp: I examined some myself but was by no means convinced. Then the



The Colony of Hong Kong



Stanley Peninsula
on Hong Kong Island

story was spread that the tiger had been shot and finally there came into camp a Chinese or Japanese paper containing a photograph of the dead tiger. This photograph I saw. People said that it was a menagerie animal that had got loose; a likely story! It is strange how loth people are to believe that tigers do visit the Colony and occasionally swim the harbour and visit the island".

We are loth to appear judgemental, but it appears from the above passage that Herklots himself was not fully impressed with the truth of this episode. There are, however several other pieces of supportive evidence, and it seems almost certain, to paraphrase 'Alice' that 'someone killed something' and that the 'something' was a large Tiger. The exact provenance of this tiger is less certain. 'Thagorus' (1979) wrote ⁽²⁾:

"During the war, a tiger was shot by a party of Japanese Militiamen near Stanley in May 1942. A Mr E.W. Bradbury, who was once a butcher with the Dairy Farm Company, was brought from the Stanley Internment camp to skin the animal, the meat from which subsequently provided a feast for members of the Hong Kong race club. The animal was three feet high, six feet long, weighed 240lbs and had a nineteen inch tail. The skin of the tiger was stuffed and mounted in the hall of Government House, from which it was subsequently transferred to Japan in 1944.

One theory about its presence on the island was that it had escaped from a menagerie during the Japanese invasion; another and more likely theory was that it had swum over from the mainland".

Although there are discrepancies between the two stories we shall avoid discussing them for the moment. Let us examine the supportive evidence for the claims. There is no doubt that a tiger is capable of swimming from the mainland to the island of Hong Kong, (or Lantau as well, as the 1915 beast is supposed to have done). As Guggisberg wrote in 1975: ⁽³⁾

"(Tigers) can easily swim four or five miles"

Guggisberg also provides useful evidence to support the claims by Herklots and others that the regular visits by tigers to Hong Kong were a perfectly natural piece of behaviour on the part of an animal with a relatively large territorial range. ⁽⁴⁾

"The extent of a tiger's range varies considerably according to habitat and availability of prey. Corbett knew a tigress which for four and a half

s years roamed over an area of 3885 square kilometres.

Kaplanov, who made a study of the Sikhote-Alin tigers and travelled hundreds of kilometres on skis following their tracks, found ten or twelve individuals within a region of 30,000 kilometres"...

A third account of the 1942 Stanley Tiger, whilst initially appearing to be valuable and exciting evidence in favour of the event actually casts some important doubts on its veracity. In 'Captive Years', their study of Hong Kong under Japanese occupation Birch and Cole (1982), describe conditions in Stanley Internment Camp, (now Stanley Prison). They quote a newspaper story from 'The Hong Kong News', an English language newspaper published by the occupying Japanese:

"Fierce Tiger shot in Stanley Woods!"

Successful Hong Kong police hunt in early morning.

Although for some years past, rumours had circulated that there were tigers roaming the Hong Kong hills, it was only yesterday morning that such was shown to be fact and the feat of shooting the first tiger on the island was accomplished by Nipponese gendarmes and Indian and Chinese police at the back of Stanley village. Early yesterday morning the howling of wild beasts was heard by many residents in Stanley village and gendarmes and police and military set off fully armed to search the hills. The search party consisting of Nipponese gendarmes and Indian and Chinese policemen was headed by Lt. Colonel Hirabayashi. The party was divided into smaller groups and a net was spread around the woods. After going over the ground for some considerable time, one group of searchers came across the tigers lair. They immediately opened fire but despite all efforts and the use of big wire netting the beast succeeded in evading the hunters. Not discouraged by the failure of the first attempt, the Nipponese police continued their search and a bigger cordon was thrown around the whole area.

Apparently alarmed by the noise the tiger rushed about the forest for some time when it was again encountered by the police party. The police opened fire, and shots from an Indian policeman this time found their mark, causing the tiger to halt. The Indian fired three shots, hitting the tiger in the head, left shoulder and lungs".

This is, presumably the newspaper article to which

Herklots refers, although, of course, Herklots refers to a 'Chinese or Japanese', publication, inferring that the article might have been in Chinese or Japanese writing. This article, was of course, in English. Birch and Cole's book also includes a photograph of the dead beast, credited to 'Lady May Ride', (see below right), which is captioned:

"The famous Stanley Tiger which was shot by the guards in 1942. This appears to be the only unofficial photograph taken by an inmate at Stanley".⁽⁶⁾

The first thing that has to be ascertained is the identity of Lady May Ride. The only 'Ride', referred to in the text was Colonel Ride, the leader of the British Army Aid Group, the organisation which helped British Servicemen and other internees escape. Whether or not 'Lady May' is/was the wife of the gallant Colonel, it is unclear whether she is the copyright owner or if she indeed was the photographer.

If this is the photograph from the Japanese newspaper, referred to by Herklots, why was it taken by an internee, whoever he or she was? Collaborating with the enemy to the extent of becoming an unofficial press photographer for a newspaper full of propaganda, which was published by the occupying would have been considered almost treasonable? If this isn't the photograph, then it means that there is/was at least one other photograph purporting to be of the Stanley Tiger in existence! Despite the claims that this is an 'unofficial' photograph, it is obviously posed and well composed. The stringency of Japanese security arrangements, especially earlier on in the War, is clearly documented over again in this book. Violence, torture and even executions were relatively commonplace for what the Japanese considered to be infringements of security. If, indeed it was taken by an internee and not by a Japanese Press Photographer, then the evidence suggests that it was done so with the connivance, tacit, or overt of the Japanese Military.

The head of the creature is being supported by a man who appears to be an Indian, presumably the policeman that shot it. If the man in the picture is a guard/policeman, as seems probable, he was certainly aware that he was being photographed. He is even smiling for the camera! It seems

almost impossible that the Japanese Security Forces could not have been aware of the photograph.

Two, seeming anomalies can be cleared up immediately. The guards/policemen are referred to as Indians and Formosans. Formosa (TAIWAN), was at the time a Japanese Colony. And although as Oliver Lindsay wrote:⁽⁷⁾

"The Japanese put great pressure on the Indians to turn traitor against Britain. the vast majority remained loyal".

This implies that some, including, presumably, the Indian man who is seen clutching the head of the Stanley Tiger, did not.



Editor's Note: If this picture is genuine it was taken in 1942 and is therefore, now, out of copyright

Lindsay continues:⁽⁸⁾

"The guards were later Formosan (Taiwanese) and were pettily officious and quick to take offence".

There is, however, another paradox. There may have been three thousand internees but it seems almost impossible that Herklots, who was after all Hong Kong's leading naturalist and the editor of the Hong Kong Naturalist magazine, and a minor celebrity in his own right, would not have known about the tiger incident from more than hearsay and rumours. Dr Herklots was important enough to be put in charge of revitalising the post war fishing industry for the region, in a successful attempt to restore food stocks as quickly as possible. Welsh (1993), gives more details of this affair and implies that Herklots, whom he describes,⁽⁹⁾ as a 'biologist just released from Stanley Internment Camp' was a person of considerable importance. Even if he had not been taken to view the carcass in person, it seems certain that the photographer, who did see the carcass would have spoken to Herklots about it!

We have examined enough evidence from Herklots to suggest that he is a reliable and indeed an expert witness. His mind may have been vague about minor details, but surely an event as important to the sum total knowledge of the fauna of Hong Kong as this would have remained fresh in his mind. As for the present authors are often accused of paranoid conspiracy theorising, but in this case, something doesn't add up!

The mounted skin was taken to a place of honour in the newly restored Government House and eventually to Tokyo as a trophy of war. The occupying army were inordinately proud of their trophy! At the time the Hong Kong News reported:⁽¹⁰⁾

"A party of press-men, invited to Stanley to see the tiger yesterday morning found it weighed about 240 lbs and measured three foot high, 73 inches long with a tail of 90 inches. According to the Chinese, the appearance of a tiger is an omen of the approach of a period of prosperity".

It seems likely that the invading Japanese were determined to extract the maximum of publicity from the event by exploiting local folk beliefs. Near the end of the war when it was obvious that they would lose they were still fermenting Chinese Nationalist feelings, often through the use of cultural motifs, and sometimes by recruiting collaborators, in an attempt to ensure that at least

the British would no longer be in power in Hong Kong. They, as history has proven, failed, but what seems almost certain is that forty years later when Birch and Cole were researching the incident for their book someone, either wittingly or unwittingly, was not telling the whole truth!

Herklots was not the only person to report rumours that the animal had in fact escaped from Captivity. Writing in 1978 Lindsay said firmly that *"it had escaped from a circus during the invasion"*.⁽¹¹⁾ and had therefore only been on the loose for five months. It would be interesting to know whether he had any further evidence to support this supposition and was not just sharing in the view, so scorned by Herklots, that bona fide wild tigers never actually visited Hong Kong.

One is left to speculate that the 1942 Stanley Tiger may not be a genuine example of a rare animal visiting the Colony. If it was in fact an animal brought in from somewhere else and released so that it could be killed as a potent piece of psychological warfare then the incident is something far rarer and far more interesting to the forerunners and to the student of military history!

The confusion surrounding this unfortunate beast does not end here, however.

A 1955 book by V.R.Burkhardt, describes the interior of the temple of the Queen of Heaven at Stanley:⁽¹²⁾

"A wooden tiger, about to spring, is a notorious enemy of evil spirits, and it is reinforced by a skin of the real beast hanging on the wall, whose resistance to moths has not been commensurate with his influence over the powers of darkness. This was the gift of an individual who attributed his escape from demonic possession to the intervention of the image".

Jules Brown and Helen Lee (1993)⁽¹³⁾ also mention the Tin Hau Temple, giving the additional information that it was built in 1767, and is therefore comparatively ancient by Hong Kong standards. They, too mention the tiger skin, and they claim that it was the skin of an animal that 'got his at the hands of an Indian Policeman in 1942', which presumably refers to the animal discussed above. (They also point out that whereas the name 'Stanley' serves to commemorate a nineteenth century Colonial Secretary, its Chinese name Chek Chue means lair of robbers or cheats, after the pirates who used the village as a base).

It would be tempting to theorise that this skin is

Animals & Men

the pelt of the Stanley Tiger, finally come to rest in a spiritual environment after its theoretical use as a weapon of psychological warfare, but it is highly unlikely, especially as it seems that Burkhardt was only stationed in the colony between 1936 and 1939, three years before the unfortunate beast met its ignominious end at the hands of an un-named Indian policeman.

Both the references cited above which claim that the tiger pelt in the temple is that of the Stanley tiger, are therefore wrong!

A final observation is that it is interesting to note that Chang T'ien Shih, the Master of Heaven, and presumably the husband of the Queen to whom the temple at Stanley is dedicated is said to ride a tiger instead of a horse as his steed as he brandishes his demon vanquishing sword.⁽¹⁴⁾

This is just one bizarre incident of many in our files. Our forthcoming book will include as many more as we can discover, and will prove not only that those who scoff at the concept of 'mystery animals' in Hong Kong, are completely wrong, but that Heuvelmans, again was right when he claimed that 'There are lost worlds everywhere'.⁽¹⁵⁾

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BURNING EVIDENCE

Loes Modderman

It's always a little tricky to write about religion. Some people may take offence. But especially in Catholicism there are some phenomena that keep tickling my sense of humor . Some practices, miracles and beliefs are too good to be true.

Too Fortean, in fact.

I'm no atheist. Although I don't belong to any church, I strongly believe in (the love of) God and in an afterlife.

I also believe miracles happen. What I don't believe is that the



Church of Rome or any of us has figured out where those miracles come from, and who is responsible.

Take Purgatory, the place where all non-Catholics and lots of Catholics go to after death, to burn off their sins, in order to reach, eventually, the higher regions of Heaven.

Says the Church.

Google 'purgatory' and you will be informed about the theology behind this doctrine, and an abundance of art picturing the suffering

of souls in that (if they are lucky) temporary place. Here is what the *Catholic Encyclopedia* has to say about the subject: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12575a.htm>

Just for the record: I personally hope that for some people on this earth there is serious unpleasantness waiting when they, at last, leave their money and foul deeds behind. But that is out of our hands, we can only hope, very humanly, for some posthumus justice.

But this is not about theology or personal wishes, it's about something far weirder.

It's about burning hands.

From people in Purgatory. Or so they say. In Rome, on the bank of the



river Tiber, is a small museum, which is a contender for the title of the most weird museum in Europe.

It's not recent. About 100 years ago it was founded besides the sacristy of the '*Chiesa del Cuore de Suffragio*' ◀ and the name of the museum is '*Piccolo Museum del Purgatorio*'.

'Piccolo' is an understatement. In fact it hardly deserves the name 'museum', for the items here exhibited are rare, and don't need much space. They need our belief, though.

What is there to see? In short: altar clothes, vestments and books that have been touched by 'souls in purgatory'.

Yeah, says the non-believer.

"Right. Every priest can hoax a print on paper or cloth, to deceive the believer."

But that's, in some cases, not what it looks like.

There's this strange book, written by Gerard J.M. van den Aardweg: *Hungry Souls - Supernatural Visits, Messages and Warnings from Purgatory* (2009), translated from the Dutch original 'Hongerende zielen'.

The back cover brings us right where we need to be:

"After a week of hearing ghostly noises, a man is visited in his home by the spirit of his mother, dead for three decades. She reproaches him for his dissolute life and begs him to have masses said in her name. Then she lays her hand on his sleeve, leaving an indelible burn mark, and departs...."

The book is full of such stories, "Church verified accounts", according to Dr. van den Aardweg, a psychiatrist.

To some people 'Church verified' may be a recommendation, to others a contra-indication.

It's interesting that the writer went to see one of those miraculous burnings for himself, a '*corporale*' from an unknown date, and took photo's of the object. (A *corporale* is the piece of linen on which bread and wine are placed during Mass). In this case the cloth is kept in the monastery of the *Paulinian Order*, located in the Polish city of *Jasna Góra*, famous for a 'Black Madonna'. The burned *corporale* however is not on public display. The curator of the monastery library showed it to van den Aardweg during his visit. The linen is scorched only on the first two layers, while the rest is undamaged. Which is remarkable.

No description or story of the miracle survives, and the only earlier account about its existence is from 1890, by *Alfred Reichel*, a parish priest of *Hundsfeld*, near Wroclaw, Polen. This is his story:

"I was with two confreres on pilgrimage in Czestochowa. When a frier of the monastery, who had the supervision of the sacristy, showed us the noteworthy things, he led us also into an adjoining vault and showed us there among other things, out of special kindness, remarking this was done only exceptionally, a square tin box with lid; he lifted this, and we saw lying in it a corporale on which a human hand that must have been red-hot had been impressed. The upper layers of the linen were totally burned through, the lower were browned, increasingly more lightly; in the deeper parts between the individual joints the folds of the linen were conserved (visible), there where the muscles are more articulate

the combustion was quite visibly stronger, decreasing gradually to the sides.

The following had occurred:

Two clerics of the monastery (of the Paulinia Orders) had promised one another many years ago that the one who would die first would give the other a sign from beyond. Now one of them was dead already for a long time and never had given a sign. This was what the other one was thinking about, when one day he just had finished holy Mass and, as usual, was folding together the corporale before him, in nine folds. Then the evil doubt went through his head that perhaps there would be no survival after death at all. At that moment, a hand appeared, layed itself on the corporale, and immediately disappeared



The unfolded corporale. The upper layers are burned through; below them the hand imprint gets a lighter color and it is just light brown on the undermost layer (the altar cloth under the corporale was wholly undamaged).

again. How much it was ablaze through and through, however, is shown clearly enough by the combustion of the nine-times folded up linen, exactly in the form of the hand."A wonderful story, and a very educational one too! Never let 'evil' doubt into your head. And Purgatory is real. Or is it?

Van den Aardweg believes so. He poses a lot of questions though about when exactly this miracle happened, about the dead friar and his appearance, and he wants to know if the dead friar appeared again to his confrater when he was released from purgatory?

Those questions will never be answered.

Another such partly damaged 'proof' of purgatory is extensively dealt with in Dr. Karl Shuker's book *Mysteries of Planet Earth* (1999), in a chapter called '*The Hand of Fire*'. Here Shuker dissects the hand of fire that burned the '*Kada Codex*'

Shuker, referring to an article in FATE, June 1953, writes that the story began in April 1696, with a lot of poltergeist activity in the *Calasantine monastery* in *Privigye*, North Hungary, then as mysterious as now, except that the monks thought immediately of spirit activity. (Teenagers, the modern focus, were not available to blame for the disturbances)

So father Franciscus Hanacius went after the cause of the disturbance. On a table he had placed a book



of Bible stories. While he was watching, the invisible presence turned the pages, stopping at page 100. This must have been tantalising for the good father Hanacius: who was this spirit? But a few days later the presence introduced himself: *Stephen Kada*, Bishop of *Erdely* in North

Hungary, who died in 1695 and whose soul had burned in Purgatory for 100 days.

Painful.

He wanted out.

And with that objective in mind he asked father Hanacius to celebrate Holy Mass over his grave, and pray, pray, pray.

The idea behind this is that the living are able to shorten the time a soul resides in

by praying a lot
Masses said.
changed, it's
unmovables of
faith.

But back to the
Hanacius,
trick of the
Bishop Kada
identity. You
ghosts, after
After being
the Devil's
touch holy
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fiery bishop
through the
pages of the
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too.

Hundred pages.

On page 101
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although that
the opposite
100; an

accomplishment the living would be unable to duplicate.

Hanacius was obviously not only impressed but also convinced, so he obediently celebrated Mass over Bishop Kada's grave on April 13 1695.



Fr. Franciscus Hanacius (1637-1710) confronted the invisible presence in his study on April 10, when it claimed to be the dead Bishop of Transylvania [now the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia in Bucarest, Romania] Stephanus Kada (1636-1695), whose voice he recognized. Kada asked Hanacius to make a pilgrimage to Nagyszombat (now Trnava, Slovakia) because his soul had been burning in Purgatory for 100 days.

Purgatory,
and having
This has not
one of the
Catholic

story:
suspecting a
Devil, asked
for proof of
can't trust
all.

reminded of
inability to
books, to his
Hanacius
hand of the
had burned
first 100
book. Not
smelled it

No more.
there was no
burning,
page was on
side of page

The following illustrations are from the Pinterest collection of *George Eberhart*, on FATE 1953.

We can't be sure Bisshop Kada was thereupon released for Purgatory, but the '*Kada Codex*' is not a fanciful tale. It really existed, until, says Shuker, as recent as 1952, when it was destroyed by a fire at the Convent of Cinta in Portugal where it had been since 1947.

A becoming end for the miraculous book, but what a pity!

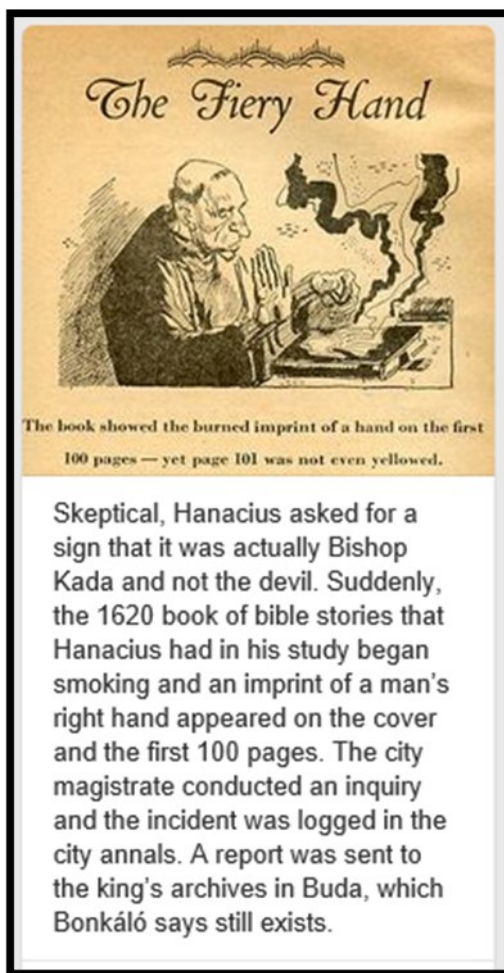
There had been investigations, though.

In 1903 there was a group of specialists, among which an

anthropologist, archeologists and a paper expert, who conducted a thorough investigation of the book, without coming to any conclusion. The 'one side only' of page 100 was bugging them.

In 1913 there was another groupmeeting planned, this time with historians, librarians and clergyman. It was confirmed that the book once was brand new, dating from 1667. Then the outbreak of WWI got in the way of further investigations.

Nobody came upon the idea, regrettably, to take pictures of the book, but then, no one could have predicted it would be destroyed in 1952, after surviving two worldfires. Shuker mentions sceptic Joe Nickel, who in his book '*Looking for a Miracle*' shows how easy it is to fake a burning



handprint. But Nickel conveniently doesn't talk about the Kada Codex, a habit of sceptics: don't mention the unexplainables. Van den Aardweg though is very much convinced these handprints are real. There's a world of difference between a believer like the

Dutchman and a sceptic scientist like Nickel, who has a point that most of the miraculous prints most likely are hoaxes.

No, says van den Aardweg: they are not. Because *"their anatomy distinctly shows personal characteristics. And they are placed so thoughtfully, almost artistically, that they silently but eloquently express a profound mystery."*

This can't be said about some of the burned hands in the museum. The one with the hand and the cross, nr 7a is almost certainly a hoax.



75-80: Ervin Bonkáló, "The Fiery Hand": Bonkáló (b. 1916) writes that in 1938 he was part of a committee that investigated the mysterious imprint of a hand burned into the first 100 pages of the Kada Codex, a 1620 imprint held in the Calasantine convent in Privigye, Hungary (now Prievidza, Slovakia), until 1947, when it was transferred to Freixo de Espada à Cinta, Portugal, where it was lost in a 1952 fire.

It's not always a whole hand that is printed. Several books and cloths show only fingertips. Most examples of the reality of Purgatory have an interesting story attached to it. This book with two hands ►, mainly the fingers, belonged to the family Hackenberg in Czechoslovakia. The story is that a member of the family went on a pilgrimage, as promised to

his dying father. On his way back he had a dream: his father told him that he was on his way to heaven, and to prove that he had left a

burned hand in his prayerbook. And that is exactly what his son found when he came back. The hands in the book are exceptionally small for a grown man, but maybe they shrank during his Purgatory stay. Van den



Aardweg (1936-), a believer more pious than the Pope, tells of many more cases in his book, without an inkling of doubt or criticism.

Because the rigorousness of someone's belief is always linked to someone's character, it's maybe interesting to note that Mr van den Aardweg has been the main Dutch activist from the 60ties till now in spreading the doctrine of 'curable homosexuality', which he always saw and still sees as a neurotic (and damnable) illness. At the beginning of the homo emancipation he did a lot of damage to a lot of people.

Can't help thinking: what will

happen to Dr. van den Aardweg when he dies? But back to the topic at hand:

To prevent getting tedious with these stories which are but a little different from each other. Not all of them are in the museum though. In fact: most of them are not. There's the imprint of a fiery hand in the monastery of St Ann at

Foligno, Italy, at the door of the linen room. This one dates from November 3 1859, and was officially investigated in the same month. There's a book by *Monseigneur de Ségur*, Bishop of *Saint Denis*, Paris, simply titled '*Opusculum on Hell*', from 1876, in which this remarkable ghost story is related. De Ségur was himself a witness to



the print when he visited the Convent, where the Mother Abbess showed it to him.

Oh dear. None of us is safe. For this nun, *Teresa Gesta*, led 'an exemplary life', according to the Bishop. But when her successor, *Sister Anna Felicia* went to the sacristy 12 days after Teresa's death, she heard an unearthly moaning coming from the room. Nevertheless she courageously opened the door, calling on Jesus and Mary for protection.



She then heard the dead nun calling out "My God! How I suffer!", and saw that the room was filled with a thick

smoke, from which the spirit of sister Teresa emerged, gliding along the wall towards the door. The spirit cried "Behold the proof of the mercy of God! " and struck the upper panel of the door on left there the print of her right hand, burned in the wood as with a red-hot iron. She then disappeared.

This happening resulted in a nervous breakdown of Anna Felicia, and in fervent praying for her soul by the whole convent, and since word got out very quickly, by all the Catholics of the city. On the third day, November 18, Sister Anna Felicia heard herself called and recognised again the voice of the ghostly Sister Teresa. But this time there was nothing to worry about, for "at the same time a globe of brilliant light appeared before her, illuminating her cell with the brightness of daylight." And calling 'adieu, adieu', she became transfigured, and like a light, white, bright cloud she rose to heaven and disappeared.

This very unlikely story was perfect for the Bishop to make his point: even a near perfect life still needs purification, and prayer. How much more suffering is waiting for the ones who 'live in sin'? Like all of us normal people? For what exactly were the sins of this moaning nun? She had transgressed against the rule of poverty of her Franciscan order, we learn. Must have been in her thoughts. But God sees all, and He is a great bookkeeper.

Another 'fiery handprint' was also related by Bishop de Ségur, and one of van den Aardweg's cases.

But this one is different. It's about a young widow living in London in 1847, and well known to the Bishop: rich, beautiful and worldly. At the time of the story she was courted by a not-so-good young lord with whom she committed various sins. What those sins were, in 1847, the bishop doesn't elaborate on.

Anyway, at a certain night the lady was reading in bed until 1 a.m., and when she blew out the candle there suddenly was a bright glimmer of light coming from the drawing-room spreading into her

chamber. The door of the drawing room opened, and there was her lover, who entered her room. "Before she could say a single word, he seized her by the left wrist and with a hissing voice said to her in English **"There is a Hell!"** The pain she suddenly felt in her arm was so great that she immediately passed out." Now here we are reminded of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, where *Jacob Marley*, in chains, visits his old friend



Ebenezer Scrooge to announce what's awaiting him if he doesn't change his ways. We know what happens next: three ghostly figures pay Scrooge a visit, and the man learns his lesson.

Back to the frightened lady: when she awoke half an hour later, she

rang for her chambermaid, who saw that her mistress' arm was terribly burned unto the bone. Apart from the stench, she also noticed burned footsteps in the carpet of the drawing room and the lady's chamber.

The next day the shocked woman learned that about 1 o'clock, when the apparition entered, her friend the Lord had suddenly died of alcohol poisoning.

The widow tried to conceal her burned arm with jewelry which she never took off.

If she changed her 'sinful' ways? Probably.

Anyway, should you ever visit Rome, don't forget to pay a visit to the Piccolo Museum in the sacristy of the beautiful Roman church. It might be a lot of things, but it will be surely very interesting.

A Winged Terror in Wales in 1914

WESTERN MAIL APRIL 7TH 1914

A WINGED TERROR. TALE OF HUGE BIRD WITH BIG APPETITE.

Many and alarming are tales told at Llanrwst (North Wales) concerning the amazing depredations of a huge bird prey, supposed to be an eagle, which seems to possess special liking for the poultry and smaller live stock of West Denbighshire. Its habits devouring lambs and attempting to kidnap more diminutive members of the canine world are bad enough, but its practice of frightening pedestrians who plod the lonely way late at night, is especially to be condemned. There is, for instance, the nerve trying case of a Llanrwst resident who was walking along a deserted street after midnight. He noticed a large bird a grey colouring standing ghost-like, in the roadway. The pale rays of the moonlight, in which it stood blinking forbiddingly, added to its sinister appearance. The man gave chase, and the bird, "screaming fiercely"—to quote the intrepid pursuer's words—ran swiftly down the street. The strenuous race continued along several streets, and when the bird found the man was gaining slowly upon him it extended its wings and flew towards the mountain. This midnight adventure is only a sample of what the bird can do. At the farmsteads and countryside hamlets awestruck folk will tell you that recently the winged terror darted from the blue and gobbled a whole brood of chickens from a farm in Gwytheryn. And after tickling its hunger with this dainty meal it flew off with the mother hen. The loss of a number of lambs is also attributed to its greed and temerity. Even these plunderings do not satisfy it. The latest sensational act was at Trefriw. A Mr. Howell, of the Gierionydd Hotel, was witting in the hotel grounds when this thief from the skies swooped down and promptly snatched up a pup which was resting within a few yards of Mr. Howell. The latter immediately threw his stick at the abductor, now on its way heavenwards, and so startled it that it held on the pup relaxed and the animal fell the ground badly injured.

The Chester Cat Hoax of 1815

Richard Muirhead and Bob Skinner

Chester Chronicle September 1st 1815

HOAX AT CHESTER : [“This may rather be classed as a Limerick than a Chester Hoax !—We are surprised that Mr Flint, the editor of the Limerick paper, from which we have copied the following. would allow any quizzing spark to impose upon him with so improbable a story.—He gives it, however, as an actual fact, and details it with much confidence!—That the cats might be an acquisition to his Imperial Majesty in his solitude, we are not prepared to deny; but we think his agent might have fixed upon a much more appropriate place than Chester for a depot We are told, that “ fictions to please, should wear the face of truth, Mr. Flint appears to be totally callous to the necessity of this qualification— The story, nevertheless, may please some of our readers, and serve to shew how easily our friends of the Sister Kingdom are hoaxed, on these considerations, we give it to the public] “A correspondent has stated to us the following account of a curious trick lately played off at Chester. A short time ago, a respectable looking man caused a number of handbills to be distributed through Chester, in which he informed the public, | that a great number of families had embarked at Plymouth, and would certainly proceed | with the British appointed to accompany Bonaparte to St. Helena. He added further, that | the island being dreadfully infested with rats, his Majesty’s Ministers had determined that should be forthwith effectually cleared of those noxious animals. To facilitate this important purpose, he had been deputed to purchase, as many cats and thriving kittens as could possibly be procured for money in that short space of time, and, therefore, | he publicly offered, in his handbills, 16s. for every athletic full grown tom cat, 10s. for every adult female puss, and half-a-crown for every thriving vigorous kitten, that could swill milk, pursue a bail of thread, or fasten its young fangs in a dying mouse. On the evening of the third day after this advertisement had been distributed, the people of Chester were astonished with an irrup-

tion of a multitude of old women, boys and girls, into their streets, everyone of whom carried on their shoulders either a bag or a sack, which appeared pregnant. with some restless animal, that seemed labouring into birth. Every road, every lane, was thronged with this comical procession—and the wondering spectators of the scene were involuntary compelled to remember the old riddle about St. Ives— « As I was going to St. Ives, I met fifty old wives. Every sack had fifty cats, Every cat had fifty kittens. Kittens, cats, sacks, and wives, How many were going to St. Ives? Before night-fall a congregation of nearly 3000 cats were collected in Chester. The happy bearers of these sweet voiced creatures, proceeded (as directed by the advertiser,) towards one street with their delectable burdens. Here they became closely wedged together. A vocal concert soon ensued. The women screamed—the cats squailed—the boys and girls shrieked treble, and the dogs of the street howled base, so that it soon became difficult for the nicest ear to ascertain whether the canine—the feline—or the human tones were predominant Some of the cat bearing ladies, whose dispositions were not of the most placid nature, finding themselves annoyed by the pressure of their neighbours, soon cast down their burdens, and began to box. A battle royal ensued. The cats sounded the war hoop with might and main. Meanwhile the boys of the town, who seemed mightily to relish the sport, were actively employed in the mouths of the deserted sacks, and liberating the cats from their situation. The enraged animals bounded immediately on the shoulders and heads of the combatants, and ran spitting, squalling, and clawing along the undulating sea of skulls, towards the walls of the houses of the good people of Chester. The citizens attracted by the noise, had opened the windows to gaze at the fun Into these windows the cats instantly sprang, taking possession of the rooms by a kind of storm or escalade. The cats, in their sudden assault on the drawing rooms and other apartments of the Chesterites, rushed with the rapidity of lightning up the pillars, and then across the balustrades and galleries, for which the town is so famous, and so slap dash through the windows into the apartments. Never

since the days of the celebrated Hugh Lupus were the drawing rooms of Chester filled with such a crowd of unwelcome guests. Now were heard the crashes of broken china—the howlings of affrighted lap dogs—the cries of distressed damsels who wept their torn faces and dishevelled charms—and the groans of fat old citizens, rushing and tumbling forwards towards the balconies, with heads divested of their wigs—bald, bare, and bleeding. All Chester was soon in arms—and dire were the deeds of vengeance executed on the feline race! It is needless to recite the various combats that took place between the cats and the men. Suffice it, that our correspondent counted five hundred dead bodies floating the next day on the river Dee, where they had been thrown by the two legged victors: the rest of the invading host having evacuated ‘the town, dispersed in utter confusion, carrying with them, however, their arms from the field of battle! “(1)

Beachcombing`s Bizarre History Blog
The Cheshire Cat Hoax of 1815
September 3rd 2015

“ This is a short story published some 90 years after the event it supposedly described: Chester is a city on the northern Welsh borders. This story is frequently retold in miscellany of the bizarre, local histories and Francis Wheen includes it in his marvellous *The Chatto Book of Cats*, 1993. There are three interesting points: the ‘amusing’ nature of the story itself (though pity the cats); the way the story changed in the telling; and the origins of the tale, which Beach can today reveal for the first time in two hundred years. The first account we’ve chosen comes from 1905.

To the Americans, who are at present visiting Chester, the old story of the extraordinary hoax is being retold. When Napoleon was about to be sent to St. Helena [1815], the town of Chester was flooded with handbills, setting forth that many families were to accompany the

British regiment which was to watch over the emperor, and that as the island was overrun with rats, numerous cats would be required. Prices from ten shillings downwards were mentioned on the bills , in which prospective sellers were asked for cats, which prospective sellers were asked to leave at a certain address at a certain time. In response over 3,000 cats were brought to the address in bags, and so great was the crowd of people that panic ensued. Five hundred dead cats were taken from the River Dee, it is said, next morning, as the sequel to a cat hunt by the boys of the town. Seven, 28 Jul 1905, 6

It is a beautiful example of how a fake story can take root. In 1815 the Chester paper was amused and outraged. By 1905 American visitors to the city were solemnly told the story as a fact. Modern accounts of Cheshire history do likewise. “ (2)

According to *The Great Chester Cat Hoax: Creating an Urban Legend in the Anglosphere Press , 1815-1955* by Christopher Smith (published in *History* volume 107 issue 374, January 2022) “...the Great Chester Cat Hoax never happened; it was a journalistic invention which rapidly transformed into a widely believed urban legend. This did not, however, prevent copycat hoaxes, as pranksters imitated the story, first in the British Isles and then later in North America. The press were instrumental in the evolution and spread of cat hoaxes, and pranksters soon utilised newspaper adverts to engineer new hoaxes. Press coverage of cat hoaxes also evolved, reflecting the changing role of the cat in urban society and emergent anti-cruelty concerns...” (3)

REFERENCES

1. Chester Chronicle September 1st 1815
2. Beachcombing`s Bizarre History blog September 3rd 2015
3. The Great Chester Cat Hoax: Creating An Urban Legend in the Anglosphere Press, 1815-1955. Christopher Smith.

Alleged Ape-Men in Europe

Ulrich Magin

When cryptozoologists want to prove the historical depth of the Bigfoot phenomenon, they generally cite newspaper reports from the 19th and early 20th centuries about feral humans and gorillas in the United States. However, journalists at the time often explained who was behind the “wild man” of a certain scare in the US, such as a hermit or a mentally ill person who had isolated himself. Yet today it is often assumed that the wild men reported were early Bigfoot.

There are plenty of such newspaper reports from Europe and North Africa as well. Here is a small selection, most of them from a trawl through the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” of the 1930s which I undertook in the early 1980s. The newspaper has since been digitized, so I was able to find most of the stories I noted online. Since there was a morning, noon, and evening edition, I was unable to locate individual reports I found in my notes because a different edition had been digitized.

The cases listed here are more fortan than cryptozoological, and I cast a wide net – but so do researchers who look for old American Bigfoot stories. Some of the cases are clearly simply due to ordinary humans, other paranormal, as for the rest ... you guess!

A “spook” in Münster

The “Bielefelder Volks-Zeitung” reported on 6 July 1908, on p. 3:

Stromberg, July 5th. There is a spook in the Teufelsbusch [Devil’s Bush]. For about four weeks, a “ghost” has been haunting the woods of Unterstromberg. The creature wears the fur of a dog that died here some time ago as a mask and is otherwise adorned with all sorts of fantastic rags. It harasses children and women in an outrageous manner, but immediately hides in the bushes as soon as an adult man appears on the scene. So it lacks courage. On Sunday mornings, the maids are already refusing to go to early mass alone and in the evenings and at night, everyone locks up in their homes in fear. Repeated forays with loaded rifles, pitchforks, etc., have been undertaken by courageous factory workers, farmhands, etc., whose children have come home terrified and crying loudly, to confront the spook, but so far without any “tangible” success. Once they noticed the

“fluttering figure,” but at this occasion it slipped away into a thicket of fir trees. The sinister guest primarily wreaks havoc in the Teufelsbusch, Kerkebrock, and Kätzel areas, which is why fearful people avoid these spots. There is even talk of summoning the famous police dog “Draga” from Lippstadt. As many believe, he is a lunatic from a neighbouring village.

As in all cases I present here, there was no follow-up piece in any newspaper.

The devil in Husum

This comes from the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” of 15 August 1936, p. 5. It deals with a trial at Husum:

A family in a neighbouring village claims that the devil is haunting their house. To apprehend this pest, the devil-banner E. from Nordhackstedt [15 km west of Flensburg] was called in. The man came, saw, and swore that the traces of the Prince of Hell could be found specifically in the family’s bedroom. He was right on the mark, because the grandfather’s perception completely agreed with that of the devil-banner, and they also agreed that Satan wanted to drag the family into purgatory. Now all hell broke loose. In order to catch the evil spirit personally, the man stayed in the house for several days and nights, wandering around like a man possessed, throwing coal, wax, and spells around.

But that was only the beginning of the major attack against the demon; the incantations continued for another 10 days with unbelievable hocus-pocus, so that the entire family was close the verge of insanity. The grandfather was asked by the presiding judge if he had seen the devil in his bed. The old man explained that he had not only seen him in the flesh, but could also describe him precisely. He was lying on the pillow, was 50 centimetres [2 ft.] tall, and had horns, horse’s feet, and a long tail. Despite the chaos during the summoning, Satan could not be apprehended. The court condemned the family’s false beliefs in the harshest terms and sentenced the defendant to one year and one month in prison for common fraud – he had been paid quite a sum.

An additional newspaper, “Der Bote vom Geising und Müglitztal-Zeitung” carried a report on 13 August 1936 and added that the village in question was called Wesseln just north of Heide. A mixture of wild beast and man can qualify as a wild man, but in this case, we are dealing with a poltergeist and / or plain superstition.

The Moroccan Ape-man

In newspapers in the 1930s, especially in Germany, you have to bear all kinds of racist remarks, prejudice, and worse things. Being called a lunatic might mean your death sentence. So look what they (and researcher Marcel Homet) have made of a handicapped person in North Africa. We read in the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” of 11 May 1937 on p. 5:

The “Ape-Man” of Skoura

Scientific Expedition Seeks to Kidnap a “Saint”

A strange dispute has arisen between an English scientific commission and the French colonial authorities. The French colonial ministry denied permission to an English scholar who wanted to bring an “ape-man” discovered in the Atlas Mountains to London for study purposes, so as not to disturb the native population, who venerate the ape-like man as a saint.

When the French colonial writer Marcel Homet returned some time ago from a trip through the Saharan Atlas, the southern part of the Atlas Mountains, he brought back the sensational news that he had discovered a human being in a village called Skoura who bore far more resemblance to an ape than any of the “ape-men” discovered so far. According to Marcel Homet, it is a feeble-minded man named Asso, whom the natives declare to be “possessed,” which, however, according to the primitive African peoples, is synonymous with “holy.” According to Marcel Homet’s description, the natives of Skoura – mostly tanners – explain the nature of this strange half-human by saying that an alien spirit has chosen his body as its home and displaced Asso’s own spirit. Therefore, they call him a “marabout,” which means “saint.” Encountering him or touching him brings them good luck.

Since Marcel Homet included a number of photographs of Asso, taken by himself, in his description, demonstrating the truly unprecedented “ape-likeness” of this man, an English expedition consisting of well-known London naturalists and

anthropologists set out for Skoura to examine this strange ape-man, Asso. The English scientists were equally astonished by the sight of this pitifully feeble-minded man, who, for the first time, truly deserved the title of “ape-man.” They therefore decided to take Asso back to London to present him to a larger panel of international experts and to examine him more closely.

This plan was thwarted by the objection of the French commissioner, who summarily forbade the English expedition from taking Asso with them. He justified this measure by arguing that such a plan would greatly agitate the inhabitants of Skoura and could potentially lead to unrest. Asso was, so to speak, the “village saint” of Skoura, and it would be contrary to French colonial interests to remove him from his home. The English scholars were not satisfied with this explanation and instead telegraphed the French Colonial Ministry in Paris, repeating their request and citing the scientific significance of their discovery. Now, however, Paris has also rejected the request, and the Colonial Ministry has adopted the same position as the commissioner. The London scholars, however, have remained in Skoura, hoping that the final word on the matter has not yet been spoken.

It would be interesting to read contemporary English news reports. I do not need to stress the fact that I detest all language that calls a mentally handicapped man an ape-man, or Africans primitive. However, to delete such phrases would give a false impression of what was reported at the time. In his book “Die Söhne der Sonne” (Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter 1958, opposite p. 204) Marcel Homet prints a picture of what he then called a “Neanderthal man”. Other sensationalist authors, among them Peter Kolosimo, repeated this claim.

A “wild man” in Osnabrück

Again, I use the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” as source. This comes from the 2 July 1937 edition, p. 6:

A forest man living in the Ankum Mountains of the Osnabrück region was recently found in a completely exhausted state in the forest and had to be taken to a hospital. This forest man, named Joh. Klaas, had been eking out an existence in the forest for 30

years and, despite being the son of a nearby farmhand and owning property, could never be persuaded to stay indoors. Even in the cold winter, he stayed outside and slept under dense undergrowth or in small earthen caves. Only in the very harsh winter of 1928/29 did he seek shelter in a small barn. Klaas was dressed in furs, and he had let his beard and hair grow long. Now in the hospital, he naturally had to forgo his hairy adornment and replace the furs with standard hospital clothing. One wonders how this man of nature, so battered by nature itself, will spend his final years.

Many other German newspapers carried this report, among them the “Jeversche Wochenblatt” (22 June 1937), the “Dresdner neueste Nachrichten” (24 June 1937) and the “Eibenstocker Tageblatt” (2 July 1937, the man here is called Josef Klaas).

An Orang-Utan in France

Less conventional is a news story in the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” of 10 July 1937, p. 6:

Excitement over an orangutan
dnb. Paris, July 9.

The population of Domazan in the Gard department has been experiencing unrest and anxiety for some time because a giant orangutan, likely escaped from some menagerie, is making the area unsafe. The police have organized a regular hunt, but so far, it has been unsuccessful.

Out of such report early Bigfoots are made – and remember there is actually no such thing as a giant orang-utan.

Apes or Monkeys in Neubrandenburg

The “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung” said on 3 November 1938, p. 7:

For the past few weeks, amusing events have been unfolding in Neu-Brandenburg, Mecklenburg. Everything revolves around two large monkeys that suddenly appeared in the cemetery and set up camp near an old memorial stone. They’re causing large crowds in every corner of town. When you see crowds of people standing from afar, you know what’s going on. Ah, the mon-

-keys! Every conceivable means is being used to catch them. A man crept up to the memorial stone and held out a large open sack containing some nuts, which they were supposed to “climb into.” The animals ripped the sack from his hands and smashed it around the monkey catcher’s head, forcing him to flee. People tried to surround the animals and attack them with a water hose and sand. They almost caught them, but the animals were always faster by the familiar fraction of a second, throwing branches and stones at their pursuers from the height of a tree. These monkey hunts are a great pastime for the young people; their goal after school each day is to find the monkey pair, who give delightful free performances, either in the churchyard, in trees, on rooftops, or in the middle of the street. The fire department has been called out several times, but by the time they arrive with ladders and fire engines, the monkeys had long since moved to another part of town.

In German, the word Affe means both ape and monkey so that it is difficult to find out what exactly was seen or reported. In this case, I feel monkey would be the correct rendering, especially as a man expected to catch them in a sack. Perhaps they escaped from a barrel organ artist.

The wild men of Sarajevo

I had one more note from the “Neue Mannheimer Zeitung”, of 27 April 1938, p 8. My brief note reads: “wild men of Sarajevo”. It is not in the edition of the newspaper that was scanned for the archives, but around the time, one should find reports of the occurrence in other sources. I have tried and failed.

The Königswinter wild man

One last story post-war comes from the “Badener Tagblatt” of 28 October 1948, p. 6.

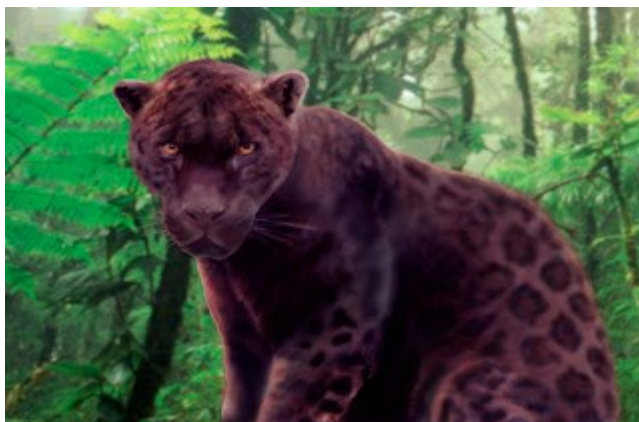
A Naked Cave Dweller

Königswinter. Recently, hikers had frequently observed a man wandering naked through the forests of the Siebengebirge [a small mountain range near Bonn]. When the police arrested him, it turned out that he was a mentally retarded deaf-mute who lived in a cave and owned a large knife in addition to a club. He was placed in a sanatorium and nursing home.

Shuker Nature

VALERO'S ROCK JAGUAR AND RED JAGUAR - TWO LESSER-KNOWN BRAZILIAN MYSTERY CATS

April 29th 2024



Did Valero's kintanari look something like this? (© William M. Rebsamen)

American correspondent Ted Leonard kindly brought to my attention some years ago a fascinating book that mentions two Brazilian mystery cats that were previously unknown to me.

Written by Ettore Biocca, first published in English in 1970 (it was originally published in Italian), and based upon firsthand testimony related to him by its subject, the book is *Yanoáma: The Narrative of a White Girl Kidnapped by Amazonian Indians*. It recounts the remarkable true-life story of Helena Valero, who was abducted as an 11-year-old Italian girl by Yanoáma natives back in the 1930s and reared by them in the Amazonian jungle.

One of these crypto-felids was known locally as the rock jaguar, and was briefly witnessed one day by Valero while in the company of some Yanoáma women and hunters. She described it as follows:

It was morning that day and we had seen among the rocks, as if in a window, a jaguar's head. It was a kind of jaguar which I did not know: it wasn't one of those spotted ones or those red ones that they call *kintanari*. It was a brown jaguar and it had long hair on its head: it was the rock jaguar.

If this description is accurate and authentic, I suspect that it was not a jaguar of any kind, but rather some other, unidentified large-sized cat, brown in colour, with what seems to have been a mane. Intriguingly, that is not the only description on record of such a felid from South America, as a maned mystery cat has also been reported from Ecuador (see my mystery cat books for further details).



A taxiderm specimen of an apparent reddish leopard (seemingly not sun-faded) spied and photographed by Bill Rebsamen, plus Bill's red jaguar painting (inset) (both images © William M. Rebsamen)

But what of the equally anomalous *kintanari* or red jaguar that Valero alluded to? Unfortunately, that single brief mention quoted above is the only time that this strange creature is referred to anywhere in the book.

Just as there are freak all-black (melanistic) and all-white (albinistic)

jaguar individuals on record, might there also be occasional all-red (erythristic) specimens? Certainly, erythristic individuals have been documented with certain other felid species, including the leopard, tiger, and jaguarundi. Alternatively, perhaps it was not a jaguar at all, but instead some other large felid, with reddish fur - a burly rufous puma, possibly?

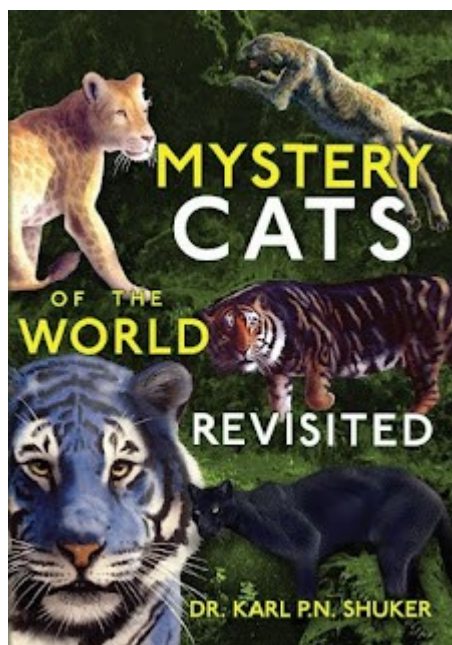
And just in case you were wondering about the taxiderm specimen of a reddish leopard depicted above, here's what I wrote about it in my book *Cats of Magic, Mythology, and Mystery* (2012)

:THE BLACK PANTHER THAT WAS RED!

On 12 September 1998, American wildlife artist Bill Rebsamen was in Springfield, Missouri, and paid a visit to the Bass Pro Shop's famous Fish and Wildlife Museum. It possessed many spectacular exhibits - but none more so, at least in Bill's eyes, than a certain taxiderm-mounted big cat of amazing appearance (as seen in Bill's photo of it above). It resembled a black panther (i.e. a melanistic leopard), patterned with dark rosettes - but instead of its fur's background colouration being black or dark brown, it was instead a rich mahogany-red!

I have several cases on file of erythristic leopards, i.e. mutant individuals whose fur was reddish (including the rosettes) instead of yellow (with black rosettes), the most recent being the so-called 'strawberry leopard' lately spied within South Africa's Madikwe Game Reserve and photographed there by safari guide Deon de Villiers (*National Geographic News*, 12 April 2012 [several additional strawberry leopards have been observed and photographed in Africa since then]), but no previous data concerning red-furred black panthers. Sometimes, a dark taxiderm specimen fades during the course of time, the mounted skin becoming brown in those areas exposed to sunlight - as from a nearby window, for instance. However, Bill viewed this panther from every angle, front and back, and could see no sign of fading on any portion of its skin; it was uniformly red all over.

This ShukerNature blog article is excerpted and enlarged from my book *Mystery Cats of the World Revisited* (2020), the greatly-expanded, fully-updated second edition of *Mystery Cats of the World* (1989), long recognized as the definitive book on crypto-felids.



Mystery Cats of the World Revisited

(© Dr Karl Shuker/Anomalist Books, front cover artwork © William M. Rebsamen)

1 COMMENT:SIMON 29TH APRIL 2024: I remember reading your first book about mystery cats, and coming away with the impression that a high percentage of feline cryptids can be explained as unusual colour morphs or other mutations within already known species.

Monster Man Eating Lobster?

Cryptozoo-oscity blog

Tabitca Cope

February 16th 2025

A Monster Tale?

In April of 1863, the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company's ship Anglo Saxon, stuffed with emigrants from England and cargo, ran ashore in thick fog on the southeastern tip of Newfoundland, where wind and waves battered it to pieces and claimed nearly 300 lives.

Not long after, three divers were sent down to try to recover valuable items.

One of those divers told the Bangor Commercial newspaper in 1893 what happened next. Diving alone, he said he was inside the wreck moving some bales around when he saw "a huge creature moving toward the vessel" I had never seen anything like it before," he said. "It seemed to be several feet high and about eight feet long and it had on each side an enormous arm."

He said it had countless little legs, a mottled brown color and two shining black eyes, along with two "supple horns, each resembling an enormous whip."

"A numb terror seized me," the diver said, and he quickly moved to depart from the ship so he could be hauled back to the surface.

"But, as if knowing what I intended, this brute, looking straight at me with its frightful, motionless eyes, walked or rather crawled directly at me," he said. As he stepped onto the rocky floor beside the wreckage, the diver said, "the two writhing horns were twining about me and

untwining. Then he would touch me with these and sweep them up and down as if feeling what kind of prey I was.”

“Suddenly and without any warning,” he said, “the monster threw out one of its arms and seized me below the shoulder. I felt as if my bones were being crushed.”

He resisted, but the more he struggled, the worse the pain he felt. At the end of each arm, the creature had a claw that “opened and shut convulsively,” he said, adding that he could see “two rows of shining white teeth” in its mouth in front of him.

He said he pulled a knife from his belt and tried to thrust it into the beast, but its shell was too hard.

“Those terrifying eyes” then moved, the diver said, and the huge lobster’s arms closed around him.

Desperate, he plunged the knife into one of the eyes. Inky fluid poured out, he said, and the creature stopped its attack, but held on.

The diver then sliced into the other eye, blinding the creature.

It still held on. The diver said the pain grew unbearable and he blacked out.

The next thing he knew, he was in a skiff on the surface, hauled out by his comrades who had dived down after getting worried at his absence. They told him they’d sliced the creature’s arm off to free him.

The diver said his rescuers told him they had seen “an awful, deep-sea lobster.”

Did it really happen? There is no way to know.

Source: <https://www.sunjournal.com/2025/02/15/deep-sea-diver-insists-a-huge-lobster-nearly-killed-him/>

Notes & Queries



A pine marten killed in Somerset in 1946.

On November 6th 2024 I contacted the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery's Natural History department regarding the demise of a pine marten in Somerset in 1946 and I received a reply and some photographs, see below.

Dear Sir/Madam

I read in the Western Daily Press of May 3rd 1946 that the remains of a pine marten found at Portbury, Somerset, had been deposited at the Bristol Museum. Do you have any photos or documents relating to this pine marten that you could send to me? I am doing research into it for the Centre for Fortean Zoology UK.

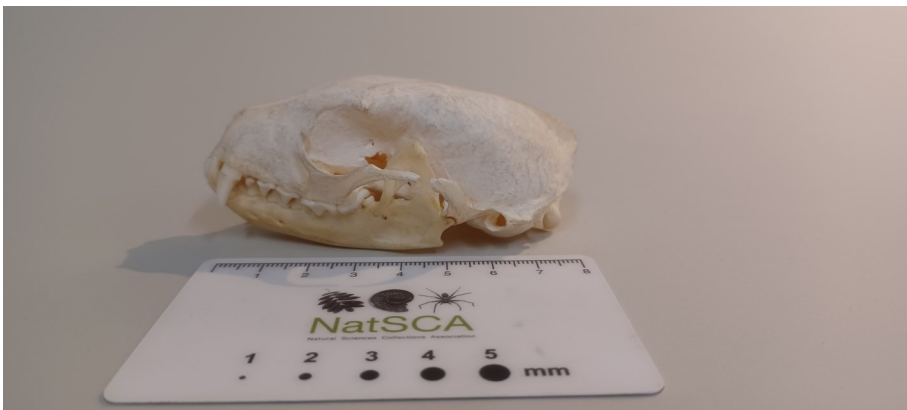
Thanks, Richard Muirhead.

The significance of this is that it confirms Jon Downes's (President of the CFZ UK) research that far from dying out in the 19th Century the pine marten (*Martes martes*) continued to exist in Devon and Somerset well into the 20th Century and possibly even later.

Below: Body of the Pine Marten. Photo provided by Rhian Rowson of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery



Below: Skull of the Pine marten. Photo provided by Rhian Rowson



A fuller treatment of this story is available in issue # 80 of the Centre for Fortean Zoology`s magazine Animals and Men.

Aztecs in Siberia

***Nostradamus* #131, October 10, 1974, p. 4, "L'actualité mystérieuse" (Weird news) section by Jacques Bergier.**

Forteanexchange March 15th 2025

Traces of a white tribe have been found in Siberia, which existed in small numbers until 1840. They resembled neither the Eskimos nor the Aleutian Islanders, the nearest populations. They called themselves Aztecs, and missionaries have seen their advanced tools.

Their colonies were located beyond the Arctic Circle, and it's hard to see how they could have settled there. Unless, like their namesakes, they are of alien origin...

The Ngoloko or Nandi Bear

The Ngoloko — What Was It?

The Sphere September 20th 1919

During the war there came to our notice an account of a mysterious animal or being seen in the African bush, but owing to the pressure of war news we were unable to set it before our readers at the time. The first public account of this strange being, the Ngoloko, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, from which, with their permission, we give the following condensed account. The actual tracing of the spoor of this disquieting nocturnal visitor is here reproduced for the first time.

Five legged lamb

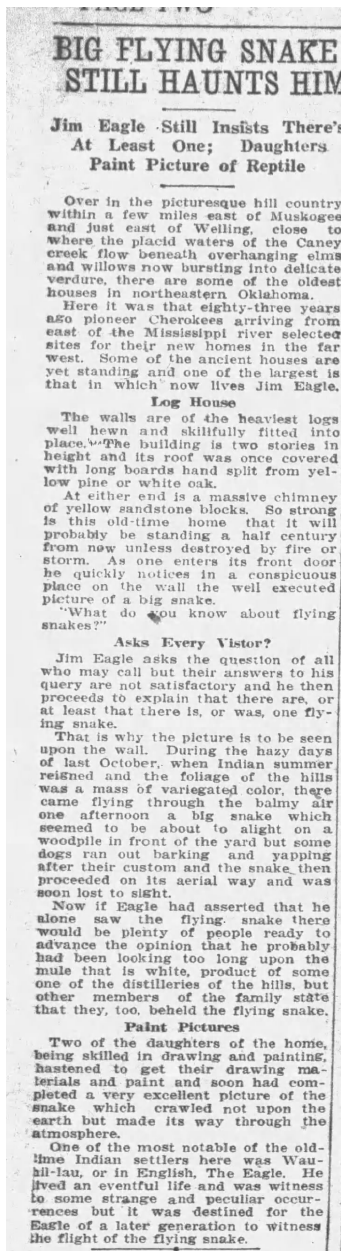
Southern Reporter April 30th 1936 Via Bob Skinner

Last week a five-legged lamb was reported on a farm in the Langholm district. Yarrow can go one better than that. On the farm of Sundhope

one was dropped with six legs, two fore and four hind ones. It had just one tail however. Each of the two pairs of hind legs belonged to a tup lamb. (A tup lamb is a male lamb who has not been castrated)

**Sent from Bob
Skinner**

**Daily Phoenix and
Times-Democrat,
Oklahoma April
29th 1923.**



Rats the size of small dogs in Birmingham

During March and April 2025 there was a strike by bin collection workers in Birmingham and a report reached a newspaper about rats the size of small dogs being seen: “A rat can get really big on protein. I noticed it when I was working in town; people would chuck their kebabs on the floor, and the rats would eat that and grow considerably. “I set traps and pick up corpses. I had one last week, and it was 22 inches long [the size of a small dog]. “It was ginormous.” (1) The smallest dog in the world is a chihuahua named Pearl in Florida measuring 12.7cm long.

1. Birmingham’s busiest rat man is catching rodents the size of a dog. I paper online . April 1st 2025.

Lamb near Macclesfield with Five legs

Macclesfield Express April 23rd 2025

Visitors flocking to see Jake, the five-legged lamb

“ This is no attempt to pull the wool over your eyes—but a five-legged lamb has been born in Macclesfield. Jake arrived to a small flock in Sutton late on March 31 and is now awaiting an operation to have his extra limb removed...Among his visitors have been a team of student vets from Nottingham as well as many friends and family. The vet team has helped organise the upcoming operation which is expected

to cost around £1,000—half the normal amount. Jake is one of three lambs in the field off Judy Lane and part of an overall flock of eight.”(2)

2. Macclesfield Express April 23rd 2025

Freshwater Octopus in Wisconsin
Kenosha Youths Exhibit Octopus Caught in Lake
The La Crosse Tribune April 15th 1934

MADISON, Wis—(AP) Two Kenosha youths who hitch-hiked to Madison to show Governor Schmedeman an “octopus” they found in Lake Michigan, Saturday, enlisted the chief executive in their plan to exhibit the curious specimen of marine life.

The governor obligingly gave the youths Stanley Makarewicz, 17, and Edward Johnson, 16, a letter stating he had viewed their discovery. Now they plan to become youthful Barnums by exhibiting the find in Kenosha store windows.

The creature has 11 tentacles which give it a diameter of about a foot when extended. The young Kenosha explorers contend it is not a squid because it has 11 rather than 10 tentacles.

An aggressive buzzard in London
Dive-bombing bird terrorises school
I paper June 3rd 2025

A dive-bombing buzzard has forced a primary school to ban pupils from playing outside following a spate of attacks. Dame Tipping Primary School in Havering-atte-Bower, near Romford, east London, said “nothing can be done” because the bird is a protected species. The bird of prey—believed to be part of a mating pair—has been

terrorising people in the village for months...

MYSTERY ANIMAL. AT LARGE IN L.M.S. LONDON DEPOT.

Derby Daily Telegraph September 6th 1923

A mysterious animal is at large the goods depot of the L.M.S. (Midland section) at Somers Town, N., and is causing great havoc among the- cat population there, says the Daily News." Several cats have been found badly mutilated, while litters of kittens have disappeared wholesale. was stated a. representative Wednesday that the animal had been, seen by at least half a dozen persons at different times, including 1 policeman night duty, lift man and labourers. It is thought to a mongoose that, may have arrived in a crate from abroad, and has established a. lair in the brick store which covers a wide area of the goods yard. Its actual den has not been discovered owing the number of runs which it has made between the brick stacks. One labourer who met the mysterious animal face to face in a potato store, said: ' I was standing on a wall when saw an animal like cat staring up at me. I was frightened, because it appeared too big for cat. It had a foxy nose and short legs. I got down quickly, but the animal disappeared. A day later our favourite cat was found in the brick store with its heart torn out and a gash in its throat." The policeman who saw it said it had a. "wobbling sort of gait." It reported that six cats have been mutilated, in addition to litters of kittens which have disappeared. The cats were kept to kill the rats, but the tables are being turned on them the mysterious intruder. The number of visiting cats which used to aid the official ratcatchers are giving the yard a wide berth.

Strange inhabitants of a well

Knoxville Daily Chronicle September 13th 1879

From `Monsters in Print` by Adam Benedict p. 77

Mr Jeff K. Clark, a well-known farmer and stock-raiser of Florissant Valley, came to the city yesterday, bringing with him a horrible looking monster of an unknown species, which he had taken from his well. The creature resembles a fish more than anything else, but has legs like a bear's and a tail like a scorpion. It has long black hair on its back, and its eyes are prominent and fierce looking. The shape of its body is like that of a sunfish, and from around its mouth seven or eight long arms or suckers, radiate, giving it the appearance of a devilfish. The animal was alive when taken from the well, but died in a short time when exposed to the air, and was placed in a brass tub with a glass cover. Mr Clark had a bottle of water which he said was full of the same kind of monsters, and he intended taking it to Dr Dean at the City Hospital, to have the contents examined through a microscope.

Strange place for a great tit's nest

Great tit's nest in smoking shelter sparks experts' study

I paper May 20th 2025

“ A smoking shelter has become the subject of a scientific study after one of the smoking bins was discovered to be housing a great tit nest and eggs. Researchers believe that the bird may have chosen the peculiar nesting location in Witney, Oxfordshire to utilise the discarded cigarette ends...”

Glowing man in New Jersey in 1875 via Kay Coggin of groups.io The Jersey Journal August 12th 1875

Elizabeth's Ghost.

Elizabeth has a ghost story. A citizen whose homeward course late at night lay near the reservoir, was suddenly attracted by a brilliant jet of light hanging mysteriously over the water. Moving along slowly it soon approached the corner where the pedestrian was standing, and as it neared him he was enabled to discern distinctly the form of a man. It was tall and erect, and moved with even tread, slowly, and with an air of thoughtfulness. In its hand it held an open book, upon which its attention seemed bent. It was dressed in a lightish gray material. As it approached he retreated to the opposite side of the road and retired a little way back toward Morris avenue, still keeping the strange object in view. It came steadily on up the bank of the reservoir to the road, then turning eastward, it passed along the road over the bridge to the eastern bank going between the ice-houses and the pump-house. Here it halted, and facing to the centre of the reservoir, seemed intent upon the book in its hand. After pausing for nearly fifteen minutes the ghost resumed its course and suddenly disappeared near the point where it was first seen.

Giant Frog-Eighteen Inches Long,
Weighed 10 Pounds

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis,
Missouri · Sunday, July 12, 1896



Credit to Oliver D. Smith and his Old Odd News site. Passed onto me
by Bob Skinner.

Giant frog in Japan
Evening Gazette (Aberdeen)
October 1st 1892

Japan has discovered a giant frog. A native journal vouches for the fact that Mr Miyoshi while conducting geographical investigations fell in with a bull frog squatted on the ground, which appeared to be about five feet high. He fled to the village, and returned with thirty villagers, who also saw the creature. While watching it from a safe distance the bull frog breathed and instantly the valley was filled with a fog so dense that the men were prevented from seeing each other. When it cleared away the bull frog had vanished.

Black frogs in Ireland
Mayo Constitution
August 20th 1835

“Mr. Mackey; curator Trinity College botanic garden, stated that while in the neighbourhood of Killarney, he was informed that an extraordinary species of large black frog existed in considerable numbers there; supposing he was about to witness a new variety of the species proceeded open an old wall, where he found several full grown toads. This fact, opposed as it is to the general disbelief of their existence in Ireland, occasioned considerable sensation “

CURIOUS CIRCUMSTANCE.—On the 19th ult., as some workmen in the employ of Richard Parkins, Esq., of Garnant Colliery, Cwmaman, were returning from their employ in the afternoon, one of the men named Thomas Rees saw (as he thought) a large winged snake about three feet long. He immediately called to his companions for assistance to dispatch it, but on their nearer approach to the reptile, it got on the wing and flew at a slow pace about one hundred yards closely pursued by the men, when it again alighted and took refuge in a large heap of coals, the property of David Lloyd, Esq., of Cwmgarnant Colliery. Although a great quantity of the coal was removed, it was found impossible to dislodge this strange visitor. It is the general opinion of the parties at the above works that the reptile had been brought from a distant country with a cargo of large timber lately delivered to David Lloyd, Esq. Its appearance caused no small alarm in the immediately neighbourhood, and a sharp look out is kept on the coals in order to effect its capture.

**Bristol Times and Bath
Advocate, Bristol, Avon,
England · Saturday, July 10,
1852**

**Thanks to Bob Skinner and Odd Old News
for the above.**

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis,
Missouri · Sunday, July 12, 1896

Austin, Tex., assisted a duck egg which was slow in hatching by cracking the shell. It contained a duck with two heads. After being helped into the world the queer duckling got along all right. Nature was prodigal, but not in the right direction. A double breast or an extra pair of legs would have



Credit to Oliver D. Smith and his Old Odd News site. Passed onto me by Bob Skinner. Apologies that some of the text is missing.

New species of stick insect in Australia
Smithsonian magazine web site
August 6th 2025

Gigantic ‘Walking Stick’ Discovered in Australia Might Be the Continent’s Heaviest Insect

Scientists identified the elusive new species from a female found in a high-altitude rainforest’s canopy

Scientists in Australia say they’ve found a new species of stick insect in the remote rainforests of northern Queensland, and it may be the heaviest insect in the country.

At about 15.75 inches long, the new species, named *Acrophylla alta* and described in the journal [Zootaxa](#), looks like a pretty massive twig. The longest known stick insects, however, can grow more than 20 inches—but even they are lighter than the recently discovered species.

A FOUR-LEGGED DUCK.

A duck with four perfectly formed legs has been hatched recently in England. Despite its grotesque appearance, it is enjoying good health and will probably live to start a new race of quadruped ducks. Unlike many monstrosities of its kind, it has every appearance of being a duck, with the exception of its extra set of legs. It has the broad bill, full chest, the wings and tail of the familiar barnyard duck. Its habits of eating, its love for the water, even its quack, are no different from those of other ducks.

The extra portion of legs are attached to the bones of the chest, well forward. The new variety of duck has the appearance of being accurately balanced on its legs instead of the topheavy appearance common to its species. Another curious characteristic is that the legs are in constant and apparently natural use when it walks. It moves by raising two feet at a time, much the same as a dog. The only advantage the extra legs seems to lend the duck is its greatly increased speed in swimming. All four of the legs are equipped with regular

web feet, and all of these are brought into vigorous action. The four legged duck's motive power is therefore increased about 100 per cent, being com-



parable, therefore, to the quadruple propellers on a modern torpedo boat as compared with the ordinary double or twin screw design.

Ashbourne News Telegraph

November 20th 1903

Via Bob Skinner